

PLACE ATTACHMENT OF SECOND-HOME OWNERS AND LOCAL RESIDENTS AS A DRIVER OF CLIMATE ACTION

PhD Manu Rantanen
PhD Annamari Kiviaho
University of Helsinki, Ruralia Institute

Nordic Ruralities, Joensuu 05/2026





RURALIA
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

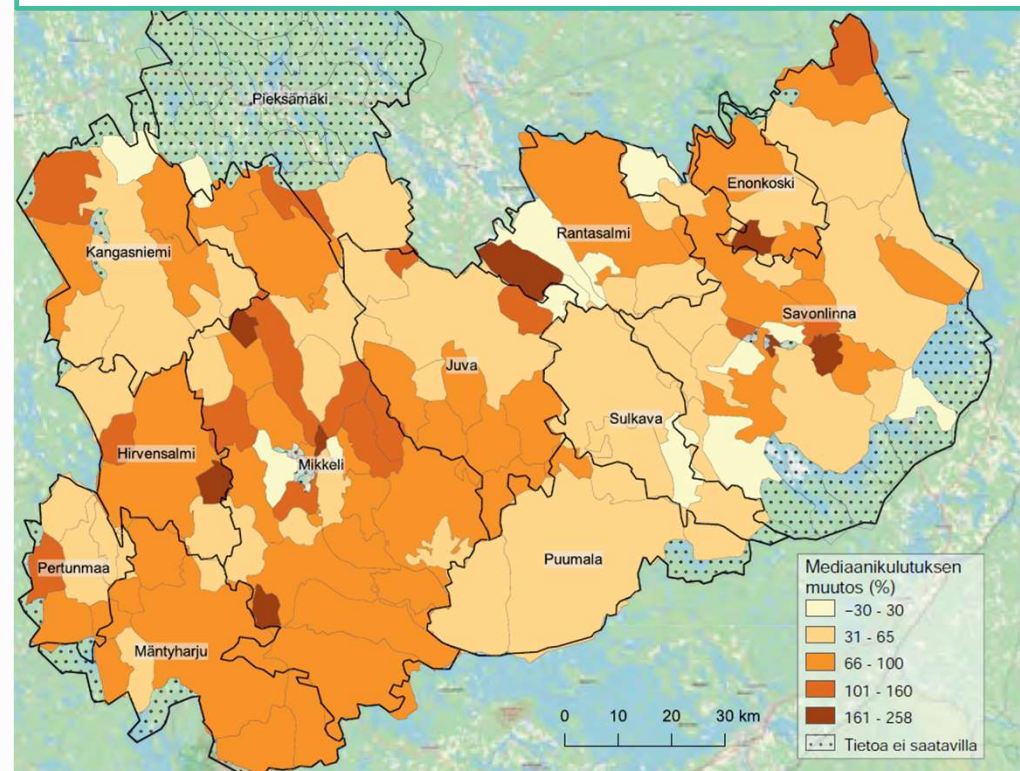
I CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND



MULTI-LOCALITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN SOUTH SAVO

- Second-home owners represent 42% of the residential population in South Savo (in 2019, Statistics Finland 2020).
- Approximately 66% of vacation homes are owned by people living outside the region (2016, Kujala et al. 2018), meaning trips to second homes are relatively long
- Monthly median electricity consumption figures for second homes have increased
- The usage season for second homes has lengthened
- Second homes account for approximately 7.5% of the total carbon footprint of second-home owners (Niemistö et al. 2024).

Change in the median electricity consumption of second homes (%) in May 2020 by ZIP code, compared to the average consumption in May 2015–2019 (*electricity consumption database*). (Raun et al. 2022)





MULTI-LOCAL RESIDENTS – THE FORGOTTEN PLAYERS OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT



(Rantanen 2026)

- The personal sense of place felt by multi-local residents can motivate them to take action and channel their resources toward less developed areas.
 - This is not just about the physical environment, but also about the experience of belonging to the local community.
- However, differing priorities at the national and municipal levels regarding the desired role of multi-local people may limit their opportunities to strengthen regional capacity.
- The study challenges regions to engage in open dialogue with multi-local residents: New participatory structures should be established where local people and multi-local residents engage in dialogue to find ways to strengthen regional development.



CLIMATE CHANGE – WHAT CAN PEOPLE DO?

- Climate change is a global phenomenon, but its impacts are felt differently across places
- “...navigating through global challenges also involves imagining and practicing new forms and strategies of social resistance and political transformation that build on citizen’s agentic capacities to initiate local change to global problems....” (Raymond etc. 2021)



II THEORETICAL BACKGROUND



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PLACE IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY ACTIONS

- Place is
 - a socio-ecologic and spatial context (Gonzalez etc. 2025)
 - Relational: Place is constructed out of a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus (Massey 1993)
 - The driver of sustainable development: Adaptations to unsustainability require a place-based approach, using local resources, people's capacities and the distinctiveness of places (Horlings 2015)
- Place identity is a governance resource
 - Place identities can bind actors together to collaborate towards a collective goal (Gonzalez etc. 2025)
- Values are important part of co-creating capacity
 - Values can build co-creative capacity in place-based development aimed at sustainability. Cultural sustainability is a sustainable way of life based on ethical choices in everyday activities (Horlings 2015)



THE STARTING POINTS OF THE STUDY

1. The administrative status of multi-local people is somewhat unclear:
 - They are officially regarded as outsiders (tourists)
 - At the same time municipalities strive to integrate them into the local communities
 2. Places and/or forums shared by local residents and second-home owners are few, despite the fact that they spend time in the same regions.
 3. We assume that
 - Both residents and second-home owners have strong sense of place
 - Most people value for the development of sustainable practices
- **New forums are needed where different resident groups can engage in dialogue and develop sustainable solutions for multi-local living.**



ACTION RESEARCH AS A CATALYST FOR TRANSFORMATION

- In pragmatic philosophy, “Knowledge is assessed by its practical consequences...” (Bradbury et al. 2019)
- The action research approach (Hyyryläinen etc. 2020):
 - Blending personal, interpersonal and impersonal knowledge
 - Researchers and participants work together to find new ways to understand and solve local sustainability challenges
 - All parties involved are subjects of the activity, and all play an important role in producing knowledge and results.
 - Aims to both understand the activity and assess its impact
 - Both researchers and participants influence the different phases of the project, and at the same time, the project also influences the researchers (the research approach is reflexive)



RURALIA
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

III IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MATKA PROJECT



ACTOR-BASED SUSTAINABILITY SOLUTIONS FOR MULTI-LOCAL LIVING



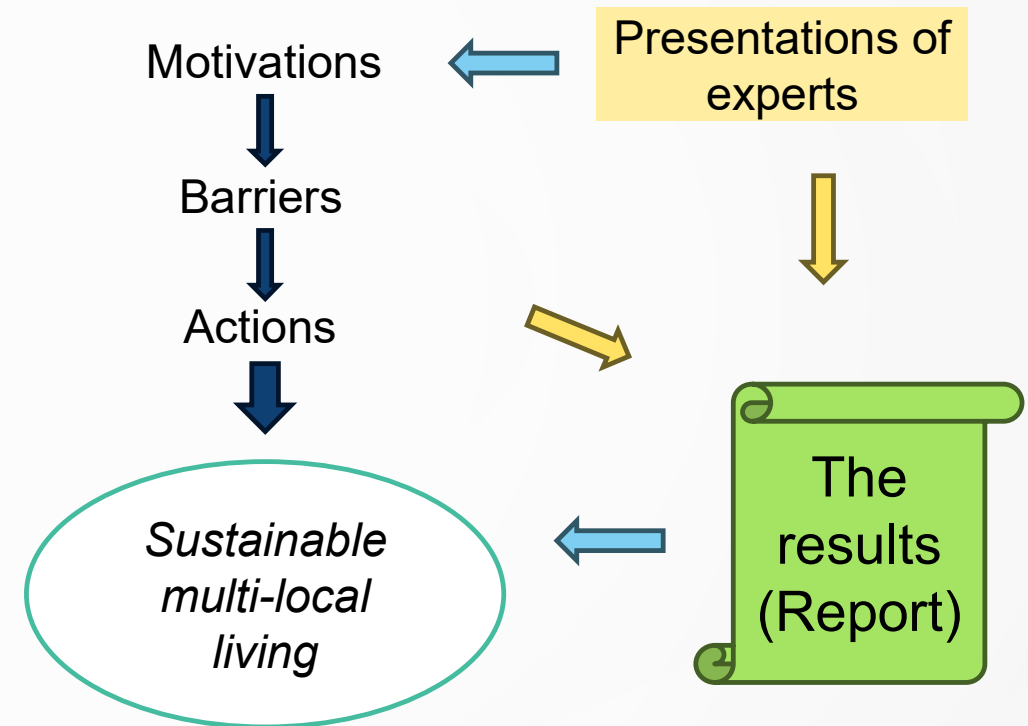
Photo: Manu Rantanen

- Actor-based sustainability solutions for multi-local living (MATKA): an ongoing project of University of Helsinki Ruralia Institute with LUT University and Aalto University
- Goal: to produce local solutions for the sustainability challenges of multi-locality and pilot new ways of organizing it.
- The project stimulates discussion on the topic among municipalities and second-home owners through an on-line multi-locality panel. Sustainability issues and solutions related to multi-locality will be reflected in open workshops.
- Business and student partnerships have been created. Lake water reviews will be used as discussion starters.
- The results will be disseminated, including a public guide.



ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

- **Notes from the sessions will be analyzed using the following guiding questions:**
 - What motivates second-home owners to engage in sustainability-related actions?
 - What kinds of sustainability-related actions do second-home owners take?
 - What barriers or constraints hinder them from taking such actions?





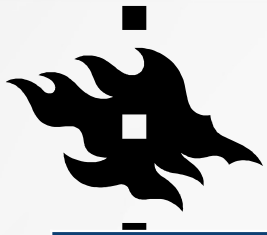
DATA AND METHOD

	Method	Themes	Completed
Digital Multi-locality Panels	<p>Webinars for active multilocal residents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An expert introduces the topic, after which participants split into two groups to discuss a selected theme. Three questions guide the session, and after each one, the groups share their responses. Researchers take notes on the discussions, which will be analysed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable multi-local living as a source of economic and social vitality Cooperation between municipalities and multi-local residents in addressing challenges of climate change Multi-local residents and their relationship with water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22 Oct 2025: 6+4 participants 8 Jan 2026: 9+4 participants 18 Mar 2026: 7+5 participants
On-site workshops	<p>Workshops bring together second-home owners, municipal officials, and local residents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In pairs, participants answer three questions on sustainable practices in multilocal living and barriers to behavioral change. The answers are written on A4 sheets, discussed together, and grouped on the wall. Researchers take notes on the discussions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint discussions in the pilot municipalities with local stakeholders and second-home residents about local sustainability challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mikkeli (9/ 2025): 11 participants Kangasniemi (10/ 2025): 8 participants Mäntyharju (2/ 2026): 14 participants



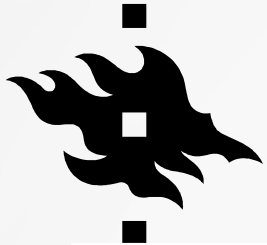
PRELIMINARY RESULTS: MOTIVATIONS

Theme	Key Idea
Rootedness in Place and Sense of Belonging	Sustainability actions are linked to a sense of belonging and responsibility toward an environment that is personally meaningful.
Emotions as a Trigger for Action	Dramatic changes and perceived threats can evoke strong emotions that act as a driving force for action.
Memories of the Place	Changes in the surrounding environment are easier to notice when the place has been observed over a long period of time.
Second Homes as Places Where Sustainability Issues Become Visible	The second home functions as a place where sustainability-related issues become more visible than in urban apartment living.
Second Homes as Places Connecting Past and Future Generations	A clean natural environment is something people want to preserve for future generations.
The Second Home as a Site for Experimentation	The second home can be a place to test new technologies, such as solar panels.



PRELIMINARY RESULTS: BARRIERS

Theme	Description	Examples
Economic Factors	Sustainability and climate actions may require major investments and can be expensive.	Uncertainty about whether the benefits justify the costs.
Lack of Information	People may lack sufficient knowledge about environmental impacts and appropriate practices.	Insufficient knowledge about the environmental impacts of chemicals; lack of knowledge about water management practices.
Beliefs, Attitudes, and Practices	Established routines and assumptions can make change difficult	Deeply rooted habits; unwillingness to change familiar practices.
Challenges of Shared Use and Co-ownership	Shared ownership can create disagreement over sustainability goals and investments.	Not everyone is committed to the same goals; investments may lead to conflict.
Sense of Powerlessness	People may feel that their own actions are too small to make a meaningful difference.	Individual actions may be perceived as insignificant.
Inadequate Local Infrastructure and Services for Second-home Owners	Limited infrastructure can restrict sustainable practices.	Water supply and wastewater networks do not reach all areas.



PRELIMINARY RESULTS: ACTIONS

Theme	Description	Examples
Mobility	Reducing emissions from mobility.	Longer stays; electric vehicles; use of public transport.
Consumption	Supporting more sustainable everyday consumption and the local economy.	Biodegradable/ecological detergents; reducing food waste; avoiding unnecessary consumption.
Sustainable Everyday Practices	Routines that reduce environmental burden, increase resource wisdom, and shift practices in a more environmentally friendly direction	Composting; recycling; cultivation/gardening; avoiding burning wet wood.
Buildings and Technical Solutions	Improving or adding technical solutions can increase renewable energy use, reduce energy consumption and nutrient loading to water bodies, and improve the cottage's usability across seasons.	Additional insulation, such as roof/floor insulation; solar panels; new wastewater systems.
Community Actions	Participating in collective efforts that support environmental care.	Volunteer work, such as helping care for waterways.



DISCUSSION

- Sustainability actions are not only practical or economic choices; they are also connected to emotions, memories, responsibility, and attachment to meaningful places
- One key question is how responsibility is divided between individual behavioral change and broader community-level action
 - While personal efforts to make second-home living more sustainable should be encouraged, sustainable choices also depend on shared infrastructure, local services and information
- Multigenerational and extended family use of second homes may hinder sustainability actions
- Municipalities play a key role in enabling sustainable choices through communication, cooperation, and local services
 - How to encourage common sense of responsibility and sustainability actions both among second-home owners and locals? There are challenges in creating dialogue between multi-local residents and local residents
- An action research approach, combined with the integration of research-based and practical knowledge, is well suited to efforts to promote a more sustainable lifestyle in multi-local living



LITERATURE

Bradbury, H., Waddell, S., Brien, K. O., Apgar, M., Teehanke, B., & Fazey, I. (2019). A call to Action Research for Transformations: The times demand it. *Action Research*, 17(1), 3–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750319829633>

González, L. R. (2025). A dynamic regional branding process as a governance tool for sustainability transitions. *Action Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14767503251342738>

Horlings, L.G. (2015) Values in place; A value-oriented approach toward sustainable place-shaping, *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, 2:1, 257-274, DOI: 10.1080/21681376.2015.1014062

Hyyryläinen, T., Rantanen, M., Pylkkänen, P., Hytinkoski, P., Kahila, P., & Saukkonen, P. (2020). Kunnat monipaikkaisessa kehittämishankkeessa - toimintatutkimuksellinen lähestymistapa oppimisen organisoimiseen. (Ruralia-instituutin raportteja -sarja; Nro 203). Ruralia-instituutti. <https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/316999/Raportteja203.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Kujala, S., Hakala, O., Törmä, H., Rantanen, M., Czarnecki, A. & Hyyryläinen, T. (2019). Etelä-Savon vapaa-ajan asumisen aluetaloudelliset vaikutukset nykytilanteessa ja tulevaisuuden skenaarioissa. Helsingin yliopiston Ruralia-instituutti.

Rantanen, M. (2026). Monipaikkainen asukas aluekehittäjänä. <http://hdl.handle.net/10138/626518>

Raymond C.M., Manzo L.C., Williams D.R., Di Masso A. & von Wirth T. (toim.). (2021). *Changing Senses of Place: Navigating Global Challenges*. Cambridge University Press.



THANKS!

Manu Rantanen

manu.rantanen@helsinki.fi

Annamari Kiviaho

annamari.e.kiviaho@helsinki.fi