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FINNISH SECOND HOMES – From Father to Son?

Finnish Second Home Phenomenon in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

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Second homes, or summer cottages, are widely spread all over Finland. It is estimated that half of the country's population have an access to one or several second homes. The phenomenon constitutes a remarkable part of how Finns spend their leisure time. Whereas traditional way of life attracts middle aged and retired urban dwellers to *return to their roots*, increasing number of second home users has no roots in the countryside to return to. Therefore, it has been estimated that the extent and meaning of second home phenomenon will diminish in time once generational change in cottage users take place. This master thesis aims at increasing understanding of the Finnish second home phenomenon. In order to do that, a qualitative research was carried out including twenty-one interviews and three participant observations, results of which were then analysed. Based on the findings of the empirical data, it can be concluded that the Finnish second home phenomenon is alive and well in the 21st century. Interviewees of different ages considered second homes significant as the Finnish way of life. However, some indications of differing perceptions amongst respondents were visible in the study, and some predictions of the future of the phenomenon could be made. The most significant of these would be that the future cottage users seem less willing to compromise trips abroad in favour of cottage holidays, as the earlier generations may have done.

Key words: Second home, summer cottage, traditional lifestyle, domestic tourism, place attachment

TIIVISTELMÄ

LUNDIN YLIOPISTO

Master's Degree Programme in Tourism and Hospitality (1 year)

KANKAANRANTA, JENNI: Suomalaiset mökit – isältä pojalle? Suomalainen kesämökki-ilmiö 2000-luvulla

Master of Social Science Thesis, 44 sivua

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Kesämökkeily on laajalle levinnyt ilmiö Suomessa. Arvioiden mukaan puolella maan väestöstä on pääsy yhdelle tai useammalle mökille. Suomalaiset käyttävät suuren osan vapaa-ajastaan mökkeilyyn. Perinteisen elämäntavan kiehtoessa keski- ja eläkeikäisiä kaupunkilaisia palaamaan juurilleen, usealla nuoremman polven mökkeilijällä ei ole vastaavaa sidettä maaseutuun. Siten onkin esitetty näkemyksiä, että kesämökkikulttuuri Suomessa menettäisi merkitystään sukupolvien vaihtuessa. Tämän lopputyön tarkoituksena on tutkia suomalaista mökkikulttuuria syvällisemmin. Työssä toteutettiin laadullinen tutkimus, joka sisälsi 21 haastattelua ja kolme osallistuvaa observointikertaa. Empiirisen tutkimuksen havaintojen perusteella voidaan todeta, että 2000-luvun suomalainen kesämökkikulttuuri on voimissaan. Haastateltavat ikään katsomatta kokivat, että mökkeily on merkittävä osa suomalaista elämäntapaa. Joitakin merkkejä muutoksista mökkikulttuurissa voitiin kuitenkin havaita ja näiden perusteella arvioida mökkeilyn tulevaisuutta. Yksi merkittävimmistä havainnoista oli se, etteivät tulevaisuuden mökkeilijät ole halukkaita kompromisseihin ulkomaan matkojen ja mökkeilyn välillä. Kun vanhempi väestö tinkii ulkomaan matkailusta suosien ajan viettoä kesämökillä, on tämä vieras ajatus nuoremmalle polvelle.

Asiasanat: Kakkosasunto, kesämökki, perinteinen elämäntyyli, kotimaan matkailu, paikkakiintymys

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Second homes are an integral and growing part of contemporary leisure lifestyles in many parts of the developed world (Hall & Müller, 2004). During certain seasons, peripheral places – which at other times may be relatively quiet places – become destinations for traffic and commodity flows and become seasonal central points. (Christaller, 1963 in Marjavaara, 2007:2). According to Hiltunen (2007), depending on national, historical and cultural differences, second home ownership can vary from being an expression of elitism to a way of ordinary life.

In Finland, the facts indicate towards the latter. Access to second homes is widespread and visits to these constitute a significant part of domestic tourism in Finland. In a country of 5.2 million inhabitants, there are 485,000 second homes. Sixteen percent of Finnish households owns a second home, and almost 800,000 Finns belong to such a household. Although the average size of an owner family with a second home is just two people, typically a middle aged couple, the cottage is used by an extended family, i.e. by the owner's family and their adult children or by siblings with their families. In this way, almost half of the Finnish population has regular access to a second home in a rural area. (Sievänen et al. 2007.)

An essential element of a recreational home in Finland is its proximity to a forest and water, whether it's a lake, a river or a sea (Sievänen et al. 2007). Finns' intimate history with the nature as a provider of life and a builder of national identity explains these required elements. Furthermore, the recreational home is a symbol of closeness to nature, authenticity, originality, roots and traditions. Although the second home has traditionally been a modest cottage, there is also a growing trend to build modern-style houses with all the technical comforts of urban dwellings, far from the style of nostalgic rural style. Thus the meanings and appearance of recreational housing may

be changing as younger generations come to the “market” with their interests and values. (Sievänen et.al. 2007.) People’s interests and values are also the main motivator for my research questions.

1.2 Personal Background for the Study

As a native Finn and being born into the culture of second homes, I find it intriguing to study the phenomenon and its present state, not to mention make predictions about the future. Second homes are very much linked to what we Finns consider national identity and national character (Anttila, 2007). One could quickly make an assumption, that second home culture is unchanging and something “that has always been and always will be”. However, increases in mobility, free-time and disposable money enable more diversity in the holiday preferences of today than what it did for example 40 years ago. As I got myself familiarised with previous literature on second home tourism, I found several researches concluding that second home phenomenon is likely to suffer a decline in popularity. To me this assumption seems strange and therefore I want to study the phenomenon. A lot of research on second home behaviour and second home ownership has been made to predict a change in the traditional values related to second homes. However, often they have served very limited purposes, as the main focus is on people who own a summer cottage, i.e. mainly middle aged or retired people. Only little of younger generations have been included in studies, neither the perceptions of non-cottage owners. Therefore I consider it worth investigating from a more general starting point.

1.3 Aim and Research Questions

Several literature and research on second homes have predicted that the Finnish second home phenomenon is bound to go through severe changes for example in time usage patterns and even suffer a decline in the number of cottage users. It is argued by many that the younger generations of today are likely to be less interested in purchasing a second home in the future or at least their second home activities would be different from those of their parents and grandparents. (e.g. Hall & Müller, 2004;

Pitkänen & Vepsäläinen, 2008; Sievänen et.al. 2007.) However, Alasuutari & Alasuutari (2010) suggest that the lack of interest towards summer cottages amongst young generations is only temporary and would once again grow to favour summer cottage life along the life phases of individuals. Therefore, inspired by both these views, **the aim of this research is to increase understanding of the second home phenomenon in Finland**. In order to increase understanding I think it is important to study people's perceptions of second homes along with the motivation for second home tourism. For the research aim, I have formulated research questions as follows:

(A) Why are Finns motivated to have and visit second homes?

(A.a) What do Finns think of second homes?

(A.b) How can second home phenomenon be expected to evolve?

Sub-question (A.a) is a general question of people's perceptions and opinions on second homes. Answering sub-question (A.a) will be for the benefit of the main research question (A) but also of the second sub-question (A.b). The main research question guides the study in its entirety and also forms the basis for the theoretical framework. Empirical part of this thesis is designed to serve the research questions and aim.

1.4 Layout of the Paper

This chapter aimed at giving an introduction to the Finnish second home phenomenon and my personal interest towards the topic, as well as revealed the aim of this thesis and research questions. In *Chapter 2* I will further go through the concept of Finnish second homes, wishing to introduce the reader to the extent of the phenomenon that is the subject at hand. *Chapter 3* will move on to the study itself, introducing the methodology that was used for data collection. Theoretical framework for the study will be discussed in *Chapter 4*, revealing the basis on which the research is built. In *Chapter 5* the empirical findings are expressed; sub-titles 5.1.1 - 5.1.4 are equivalent to sub-titles in *Chapter 4*, following the design and revealing the specific results from the qualitative interviews. Observations are handled independently in *Chapter 5*. Since it also includes the analysis of empirical findings, conclusion in *Chapter 6* concentrates

mainly on answering research questions, but also to discuss the development of second home phenomenon, predictions of which are based on the results of this thesis project. In *Chapter 7* I will finally reflect upon the whole thesis process.

2 THE SECOND HOME PHENOMENON

The following pages will introduce the reader to the concept of second homes in Finland through numbers and history, to give an overall picture of the extent of the phenomenon.

2.1 Defining Second Home

Summer cottage or second home – to be used synonymously in this thesis – is defined as a purposely built, stationary, free-time residence, or a residence that is used as a holiday or free-time residence. Cottages to serve businesses, holiday villages and cottages at allotment gardens are not counted as summer cottages, neither are caravans and camper vans. (Official Statistics Finland, 2010a.)

2.2 Finnish Second Homes in Numbers

In Finland, there were 485,100 summer cottages at the end of 2009 (*Figure 2.1*) with almost 800,000 Finns belonging to a summer cottage household (Statistics Finland, 2010a). Since the previous year, the number of summer cottages had increased by 3,400 cottages, of which some were newly built and some former permanent residences that were transferred into free-time use. In the 21st century the production of newly built summer cottages has been more than 4,000 buildings per year. However, the construction of summer cottages has continuously kept slowing down compared to the pace in which summer cottages were built in the early 1990s, not to mention earlier decades. Whereas 8,000 new summer cottages were constructed at the beginning of the 1990s, over the recent years the construction has decreased by half. In addition, the stock of summer cottages doesn't increase directly by the number of newly built cottages for the reason that some of summer cottages are transferred into permanent residences or taken off of use. (Official Statistics Finland, 2010a.)

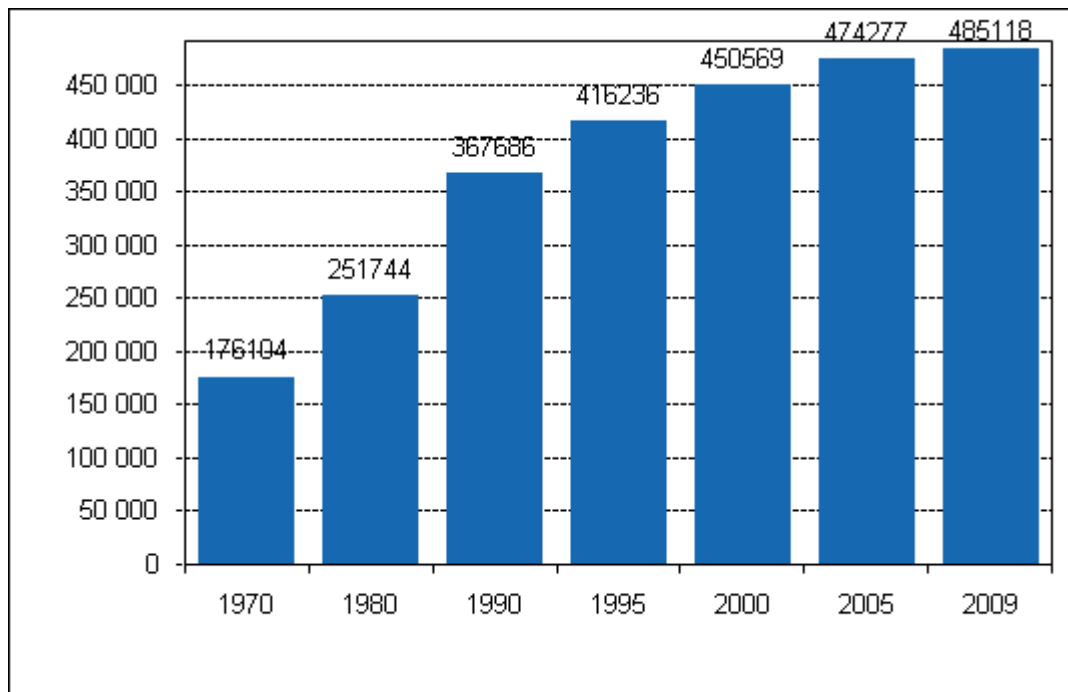


Figure 2.1: Number of summer cottages 1970-2009. (Official Statistics Finland, 2010)

2.3 History of Finnish Second Homes

It is argued that a touristic interest in the countryside requires the process of urbanisation. Accordingly, urbanisation has created social structures, and populations with real experiences of urban life have needed to idealise the countryside. (Müller, 2007.) Similarly, longing for a country life is also the reason behind summer cottages being so popular and common.

During recent decades, Finns have constructed about 430,000 private leisure residences (SVT, 1997 in Jokinen, 2002). The construction of summer villas started in Finland already in the 19th century, when the wealthy bourgeoisie began to build villa communities in the periphery of major cities. Back then villas were mostly large and decorative buildings (*Picture 2.1*), used during leisure time and summers. In the early days only urban families acquired villas for their own use. In the early 20th century there were up to 1,000 villas in Finland and at the time of gaining independence in 1917 their number had grown to 3,000.

Time between the two World Wars was a time of economic growth and development. Population in towns doubled in numbers. During the two decades after gaining independence the number of villas quadrupled. The wealthy people of industrial centres and densely populated farm communities started to take after the example of urban bourgeoisie and purchased their own villas; as a result in 1940 there were over 20,000 villas in Finland. Villas built during these times showed efforts towards more simple and practical style in construction. Extravagant decoration decreased and more and more villas started to look like *cottages* (*Picture 2.2*). (Metsäkallas et al. 1995; Official Statistics Finland, 2007.)



Picture 2.1: An old summer villa (Photo: K. Sundvall)

After the wars – at the end of 1940s – purchasing a summer cottage was more common than ever before. In the 1950s new summer cottages were constructed and purchased at the speed of 4,800 cottages per year, which was five times more than in the 1930s. The 1950s was also when summer cottages began to be available for all of the population. The fast increasing urbanisation speeded up the number of summer cottages, when a large number of people who were born in the countryside, moved to urban centres for industrial work or in the field of hospitality. At the same time, free-time became more common; when Saturdays changed into holidays in the 1960s, it was possible to spend time at the summer cottage even in the weekends. (Metsäkallas et al. 1995.)



Picture 2.2: Typical contemporary Finnish summer cottages

How is summer cottage culture in the 21st century? The following arguments I base on years of personal experience, observation, conversations and cottage visits. Today second homes constitute a big part of the Finnish way of life. There is a growing trend to build small houses and luxury villas with all amenities, but the traditional summer cottage hasn't lost its appeal. The significance of second home phenomenon is being reproduced by media and literature, not to mention the annual Second Home Trade Fair, strengthening the phenomenon's position in the Finnish minds. Also the ever speeding pace of everyday life adds to the demand of second homes. Not everyone has a second home, or even an access to one, but the idea of a romantic little cottage, simplicity and natural environment is very appealing to most Finns.

2.4 Second Homes in Relation to Finnish National Identity

Nature has been important in determining how Finland and its landscapes are represented. It has been present both as a factor to explain the national character and as an element in the representations of national identity (Paasi, 1996a in Paasi, 1997). The writings of J.L. Runeberg and Z. Topelius created the idea of a Finnish landscape dominated by lakes. And dominant they are; with approximately 190,000 various sized lakes, Finland is entitled to be called "the land of thousands of lakes" (Valtion ympäristöhallinto, 2011).

In his study on Finnish national identity, Anttila (2007) found that Finns are attached to their country through nature, not as much through people or buildings as may be the case for example in older European countries such as France with Saint Joan of Arc, Greece with Acropolis and the United Kingdom with generations of Royal families. Descriptively, instead of representing remarkable people and buildings in the Finnish Euro coins, there are cloudberry and swans, whereas the old Finnish Mark had for example a bear and the national flower Lily of the valley. Lehtonen (2004, in Anttila 2007:198) suggests that a lake view represented from a bird's-eye-view is an idealistic Finnish landscape, with no space for human figures. However, by his absence the Finn was identified with the nature; he was nothing special, only something natural and pure – sheer universe.

Summer cottages serve to people's longing to be a part of the nature once again. Anttila (2007) discovered that summer cottages represent a significant part of the Finnish natural environment and come third in the most important contexts of what is identified as Finnish. Moreover, Williams and Kaltenborn (1999, in Pitkänen 2008:187) state that second homes provide "continuity of identity and sense of place through symbolic territorial identification with a landscape of shared cultural values". Additionally, Pitkänen (2008) found that despite the differing personal meanings, the perception of the landscape was based on strikingly similar cultural categories. The images of the second-home landscape were entwined especially with the cultural discourses of national landscape, environmental consciousness and confrontation of urban and rural (Pitkänen, 2008).

Considering the characterising facts of Finnish folklore and the extent of the second home phenomenon, one can make a simple conclusion that summer cottage vacations are a remarkable part of domestic tourism in Finland. However, since the world is in a constant change, it is unlikely that the summer cottage culture would stay unchanged. Many researchers have already predicted a decline in importance for the phenomenon. Therefore this thesis will aim at better understand the concept and make its independent discussion about the future state.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the research methods that were seen appropriate to use for the study at hand.

3.1 The Case of Second Home Phenomenon

Case studies are widely used across the social sciences (Hartley, 2004). According to Stake (1995), a case study is “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case”, through which one tries to understand its activity within important circumstances. He points that one is to study a case when it itself is of very special interest. In some situations researchers choose cases in need for general understanding. However, some cases hold an intrinsic interest for the researcher and can be understood as a *given case* itself. (Stake, 1995.) I found the latter very descriptive of my research. Since it is of my special interest to study the Finnish second home phenomenon, and since the phenomenon is a complex, functioning thing, it acts as the case of this study.

3.2 Qualitative Research

Even though Silverman (2010) warns that “doing qualitative research is in many respects no different than doing everyday life; it is complex and sometimes downright chaotic”, as the study at hand is built around a very social phenomenon, a qualitative method was chosen in order to gain comprehensiveness. As the main method for this study, I have used qualitative open-ended interviews. To complement, I have also chosen to use another qualitative method, participant observation, for data collection.

3.3 Qualitative Research Interview

Interviews are a far more personal form of research than questionnaires. Notable with regards to this study is that if what is sought is opinions and impressions, interviews are generally easier for respondents. According to Bryman (2008) quantitative interviews comprise of very strict and simple questions. The qualitative research interviews, on the other hand, provide in-depth information pertaining to participants' experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic. There are various forms of qualitative interview design, for example informal conversational interview, general interview guide approach, standardised open-ended interview and closed fixed-response interview. (Turner, 2010.)

With regards to the topic of this thesis, with its aim and research questions, a standardised open-ended interview was seen most appropriate. This form of interview is extremely structured in terms of the wording of the questions. Participants are asked identical questions, but the questions are worded so that responses are open-ended. (Gall et.al. 2003 in Turner, 2010.) This open-endedness allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they want and also the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up (Turner, 2010). Applying this to the study at hand - to study the second home phenomenon from the viewpoint of people's opinions and feelings - it is of most importance that respondents may speak freely without constraints from the interviewer. However, Creswell (2007) identifies some weaknesses with open-ended interviewing. For the nature of open-ended interviews, it can be quite difficult for researchers to extract similar themes or codes from the interview transcripts as they would with less open-ended responses. Although the gathered data is rich with qualitative information, it can be a more troublesome process for the researcher to fully and accurately reflect an overall perspective of all interview responses through the coding process. (Creswell, 2007 in Turner, 2010.) On the other hand, this reduces researcher biases within the study, particularly when the interviewing process involves many participants (Gall et.al. 2003 in Turner, 2010).

3.3.1 Selection of Interview Questions

Thirteen standardised open-ended questions were built around the summer cottage phenomenon (see appendix 1). The aim of the research guided designing the question formulation. Previous social science research on second homes guided the themes on which the questions were formulated. These themes are *nature and wilderness, traditional way of life, cottage activities and place attachment*. Since there were both cottage owners and non-cottage owners amongst the respondents, it was of most importance that the questions suited everyone.

Questions 1, 2 and 13 concentrate on gaining an overview of people's thoughts about summer cottages. Questions 3 and 4 explore how much respondents use summer cottages, to get an overview of the utilization rate. Questions 6, 7 and 8 are related to both the idea of the traditional way of life and cottage activities, whereas questions 9 and 12 concentrate on the importance of nature. Questions 5, 10 and 11 were designed to find implications of the future of summer cottages. All questions can be seen informative on the motivation for second homes. They are to serve the aim of this research which, to repeat, is to increase the understanding of the second home phenomenon in Finland, with research questions as follows:

(A) Why are Finns motivated to have and visit second homes?

(A.a) What do Finns think of second homes?

(A.b) How can second home phenomenon be expected to evolve?

3.3.2 Interviewees

Creswell (2007 in Turner, 2010) discusses the importance of selecting the appropriate candidates for interviews. He asserts that the researchers should utilize one of the various types of sampling strategies such as criterion based sampling or critical case sampling in order to obtain qualified candidates that will provide the most credible information to the study. Creswell also suggests the importance of acquiring participants with willingness to openly and honestly share information. I used criterion based sampling when gathering interviewees. However, since the aim of this study is

to increase the understanding of second home phenomenon and study the motives and opinions of Finns in general, only two criteria were imperative: the interviewees should be Finnish and have some summer cottage experience; whether it would be that they were cottage owners, renters or occasional visitors. I must note that the latter was not a difficult criterion to fulfil. In fact, it would have been challenging to find Finns with no connection to any cottage. Additional criteria were not used, for example respondents' age, gender, location, occupation and such were irrelevant with regards to the aim of this thesis.

In order to gain in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon, standardised open-ended interviews took place, enabling respondents to give away as much information as they desired. All interviewees except one were gathered from a circle of my acquaintances, who were contacted by telephone or email. The one interviewee whom I did not know, was recommended to me by one of the participating acquaintances. At first, twenty interviews were planned, but due to a lack of interest to participate, one respondent's answers produced very limited data and therefore a complementary respondent was interviewed. The interviews took place between April 24th and May 2nd. Approximately ten minutes were spent on most of the interviews. Fifteen out of 21 interviews were either face-to-face or telephone interviews, and recorded and transcribed into English. Questions were sent by email to six interviewees for their convenience. All the interviews are attached in the appendix (see appendix 2) and recordings are available on request.

The 21 respondents were handled independently but once interviewed, they were divided into four age groups for clearer analysis. Respondents' ages varied between 13 to 72. The group of *retirees* consisted of four respondents in their late 60s to early 70s. Five people formed the group of *working adults* in their 40s and early 50s. Four of the respondents formed a group of *teenagers*, as they were in their teens. The biggest entity was *young adults* in their twenties and early thirties. It wasn't a conscious choice to make the latter group biggest, but because young adults are the next generation likely to make a decision whether to purchase a cottage, or at least possible active cottage users in the relatively near future, I consider it positive that they were also most represented.

3.3.3 Implementation of Interviews

When it came to the implementation stage of the empirical process, I followed McNamara's (2009) recommendations for conducting face-to-face and telephone interviews. Firstly, it was important to choose an interview setting with little distraction and a place where interviewees would feel comfortable. Therefore face-to-face interviews took place at participants' homes or in summer cottage surroundings. At the beginning of telephone interviews it was double checked that they had time and there were no distractions. Then the purpose of the interview was explained to every respondent, as well as terms of confidentiality. It was also made clear that the interviews would be recorded using an audio device and that they were free to answer with as many words as they desired. During interviews I was careful to remain as neutral as possible, meaning that strong emotional reactions to responses or encouragement to answer in a certain way were avoided. For example, if I had been surprised or pleased about an answer it might have influenced answers to future questions. I think this was especially important to be aware of since the interviewees were my acquaintances.

Six interviews out of twenty-one were e-mail interviews. Like the personally interviewed participants, e-mail interviewees were not random respondents either. They were my acquaintances and requested to participate by telephone or e-mail, and with whom e-mail interviewing turned to be the most appropriate. Meho (2006) states that e-mail interviewing can be in many cases a viable alternative to face-to-face and telephone interviewing. For example, e-mail enables the interviewing of shy people or people who do not or cannot express themselves as well in talking as they do in writing. It also allows researchers to disregard any limitations in geographical location or time zone. I did not conduct e-mail interviews for suspecting to have shy participants, however geographical limitations were indeed the reason why some interviews in this study were done by e-mail. Yet another distinctive – in my opinion also one of the most valuable – feature in e-mail interviewing is that it allows participants to take their time in answering questions and to take part in the interviews in a familiar environment, which might make them feel more comfortable expressing themselves (Meho, 2006). This I believe was also visible in the e-mail

responses of the study at hand. However, although these advantages may generate rich and high quality data, it also means that the e-mailed questions must be much more self-explanatory than those posed face-to-face. There is always room for miscommunication and misinterpretation even in direct, personal interaction, not to mention in e-mail interviews (Meho, 2006). In my e-mail interviews, respondents were encouraged to ask in a case of uncertainty, however they had seemed to interpret the questions in the way I had meant them and no questions appeared, nor did I have to get back to them with follow-up questions.

3.4 Participant Observation

One of the most common methods for qualitative data collection is participant observation. It requires that the researcher – here, I – becomes a participant in the culture or context being observed – here, summer cottage surroundings. Participant observation often requires months or years of intensive work because the researcher needs to become accepted as a natural part of the culture in order to assure that the observations are of the natural phenomenon (Trochim, 2006). However, because I myself have been a natural part of the second home culture since birth and because the time and work load regarding this thesis process were limited, participative observations took place under three short periods.

Therefore, as it is recommended by for example Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) and Jorgensen (1989) – and since I had an access to appropriate settings, I chose to use a participant observation to complement the interviews. The small scale observations were carried out during a weekend in April at a summer cottage of the author's acquaintance and on shorter visits to two different cottages during summer 2011. There were nine people present in the April observation weekend, all of whom had also taken part in the interviews. The observation consisted of approximately 48 hours. The two observations in the summer consisted of a one-day visit and an overnight visit, with a presence of four to six people. Naturally it was not announced to anyone, that an observation would be taking place during visits. The observations were unstructured, meaning that all the discoveries were taken as they came. However, in

the observations I did follow the interview design and took notes, which were later transcribed and are available on request.

Several researchers have noted the limitations involved with using observations as a tool for data collection. Participant observations are conducted by a biased human who serves as the instrument for data collection: the researcher must understand how her gender, ethnicity, class and theoretical approach may affect observation, analysis and interpretation. (Kawulich, 2005.) Especially since I am involved in the Finnish second home scene, it was important that this was recognised during the analysis of the results as well as along the whole process.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of the Research

Validity describes a study's eligibility and generalisation. It assesses how successfully one has managed to investigate the phenomenon that was aimed to be investigated, and whether the interpretation that arose from the study will hold true in reality. Questions of validity accompany the study in its entirety. For example, the ground for study's theoretical, methodological and empirical compatibility is being evaluated, as well as the research layout and context, divergent cases are brought to light and interpretation is being tested. *Reliability* deals with the evaluation and credibility of the data and analysis. One estimates the research process, especially the tooling of empirical data in different phases. Hence, reader has an opportunity to follow and criticise researcher's reasoning. It also reveals whether another researcher would reach the same conclusions based on the same data and interpretation regulations. (Pyörälä, 2002.) There is a general agreement that all research studies must be open to critique and evaluation. Failure to assess the worth of a study could have dire consequences. Ambiguous or meaningless findings may result in wasted time and effort while findings which are simply wrong could result in the adoption of dangerous or harmful practices. (Long & Johnson, 2000.) Wrong findings of the particular study at hand would hardly put anyone in danger or cause harmful practices, nevertheless, it is of most importance that the whole thesis process is executed in a rigorous manner and the results of the study are found valid and reliable. For example the researcher's

choice of interview sample, selection of interview questions and personal interests could be questioned; therefore attention has been paid to reveal the methods, empirical findings and conclusions of this study in a way which enables the reader to make judgements.

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section I will discuss the previous literature and research that are relevant to my thesis topic and research questions. In order to increase understanding on second home phenomenon and discuss its future development, a look at motivational factors regarding second home tourism is of most relevance. I will start by defining some general tourist motivators, to then move on to second home motivation that is divided into four sub-sectional themes.

4.1 General Tourist Motivation

Push and pull factors are generally used in explaining people's motivation to travel. A review of previous literature on tourism motivation reveals that people travel because they are *pushed* into travelling by internal reasons such as the need for escape, rest and relaxation; and *pulled* by external reasons such as certain aspects of the chosen destination, leisure infrastructure and natural or cultural features. (e.g. Mansfeld, 1992; Devesa et.al. 2010; Moscardo et al. 1996.) "The need to get away from the everyday stress of the usual environment" followed with "The need for relaxation" can be noted common nominators of tourist motivation not only in several tourist literature and domestic second home research but also with regards to this thesis. They also indicate towards the special connection between tourism and urbanisation; for example Dann (1977) and Matley (1976) both concluded that big-city dwellers are motivated to travel as tourists by their need to escape "the artificial, monotonous, anomic and difficult day-to-day life" (in Mansfeld, 1992:404).

In their study of young-adults' travel behaviour Pizam et.al. (2004) found that young adults in their 20s preferred tourist activities that are related to shopping, visiting friends and relatives, going to bars, eating local foods and sunbathing at the beach. The preferred type of vacation of young leisure travellers was an active, inexpensive,

medium-paced, slightly spontaneous, less comfortable and rural vacation. They also discovered that young tourists are more likely to seek adventure-factors and risks. These “sensation seekers” like to travel and are more willing to accept uncertainty and risk in travel to less familiar places. Age was found to be a powerful demographic influence on sensation seeking, rising between ages 9 and 14, peaking in late adolescence or early 20s and declining steadily with age thereafter.

Blazey (1992) on his part discovered that although retirees have more money, time and awareness of opportunities to travel, they appear to be somewhat less adventurous, preferring domestic destinations as well as those places that they may have visited on a previous occasion. He found that this could be explained by a fear of certain modes of travel and lacking transportation. Retirees may feel that travel requires too many decisions be made and may indicate a general lack of interest. According to Blazey, physical infirmity and a less adventuresome spirit constrain the retirees and they easily fall into the accustomed patterns.

What Blazey and Pizam et.al. have found is interesting with regards to this thesis. The general views of tourism motivation in their studies would support the assumption that older generations could be rather interested in “settling” for second home tourism whereas it is suggested that young people would lack interest towards second homes.

4.2 Motivation for Second Home Tourism

There are overlapping factors between second home and more general tourist motivations. One common nominator is escapism. Since the days of massive urbanisation, for many people summer cottages have been a way to maintain a connection with the countryside and the peasant way of life (Kumpulainen, 1999 in Jokinen, 2002: 107). Sievänen et.al. (2007) discovered that life at a second home is seen as an *escape to nature* from the mentality of control, predictability and alienation associated with urban life – not only amongst the older but within all generations. Closely in relation to nature are *traditional way of life* and *second home activities*, implying extraordinariness in the summer cottage life compared to the ordinary

surroundings of one's usual, often urban environment. Furthermore, *place attachment* is a distinguishing factor between second home and other tourist motivation. These four serve as themes for second home motivation and will be here on discussed for the purpose of increasing the understanding of second home phenomenon.

4.2.1 The Escape to Nature and Wilderness

Nature as one of the main motivators for summer cottage living is being emphasised by many scholars because second homes in Finland are tightly entwined with the idea of countryside. For example Pitkänen and Vepsäläinen (2010) suggest that second homes represent a promise of a simple life close to nature. They add that the rural idyll myth was an important part of the building of the national landscape discourse already in the turn of the twentieth century. Countryside was contrasted especially with cities and urban life, which were seen as artificial, degenerating and estranged from nature (Häyrynen, 2004; Lüthje, 2005 in Pitkänen & Vepsäläinen, 2010). Therefore second homes are believed to have a central role in the maintenance of Finns' special connection to nature. People tend to escape to the wilderness in hopes of having extra space and being freed from the stresses of everyday life (Norris & Winston, 2010). Alasuutari & Alasuutari (2010) stress that not only do people escape *to* nature, they escape *from* their usual, often urban, environment. Additionally, according to them, the travel to a cottage as a transition rite further emphasises the notion of escapism.

4.2.2 Traditional Way of Life

The traditional, rural way of life is best conveyed in people's representations of second home activities and social environment. People's common activities at cottage refer to renovation, maintenance or building of the second home property. The myth of a heroic small land holder building his croft with his own bare hands still lives on in Finnish culture and is reproduced not only in literature and films but in the Finnish cottage culture; cottage activities provide a chance to engage in agrarian work and relive heroic rural myths (e.g. Venäläinen, 1989; Pitkänen & Vepsäläinen, 2005 in Pitkänen & Vepsäläinen, 2010). Furthermore, picking berries and mushrooms and fishing to enhance the self-sufficient food management of the family are activities that

derive from the “foraging practices and use of nature of the hunter-gatherer society”. In this respect, the second home culture can be seen as contributing to the continuity of traditional nature pursuits. (Pitkänen & Vepsäläinen, 2010: 201.)

Excluding the commonness of electricity at cottages, summer cottages are preferably kept simple and traditional. Nieminen (2004) states that over the last few decades summer cottages have varied from plain, only-for-summer-use cottages to well-equipped small houses. In 2003, 80 percent of all summer cottages had electricity, enabling people to have things to which they are accustomed in modern life. However, only a half of all summer cottages had a running drinking water. The other half brought their drinking water from elsewhere or had a private well or a spring. In addition, remarkable 70% of summer cottages still had only a traditional outhouse, while the minority had an indoor WC or dry toilet. (Nieminen, 2004.) Alasuutari & Alasuutari (2010) discovered that the simple and traditional life of summer cottages is a huge part of the whole cottage experience and escape. They state that summer cottages are preferred to be different in many possible ways from the ordinary life settings in the city. This way, one is possible to have a whole other reality at the cottage, which further increases the notion of escapism. (Alasuutari & Alasuutari, 2010.)

4.2.3 Second Home Activities

Moscardo et.al. (1996) raised the meaning of activities as a motive when making decisions between travel destinations. This also applies to second homes. The most common way to enjoy the cottage surroundings can be described with the phrase relaxation. Hence, as Pitkänen and Vepsäläinen (2010:201) put it “besides the physical activities, the nature surroundings provide opportunities for idleness and relaxation such as tanning, lying on the beach, gazing into the fire, enjoying the quietness and listening to the summer rain”. The results of the interviews in this study reveal that activities are seen as a very important aspect of the cottage life, and more significantly, they are something concrete that distinguishes the cottage from city life. Referring to chapter 4.2.2, summer cottage activities are often fairly traditional, suggesting a utilitarian relationship with nature and land. However, in 2010, the most typical activities related to second home environment were recreational ones (Pitkänen &

Vepsäläinen, 2010), suggesting a possible transition in summer cottage values. Nevertheless, in general cottage activities seem to fall into one common pattern – outdoor activities. Activities such as swimming, rowing and angling are familiar to many second home owners from their childhood and are further taught to the next generation at the cottages, supporting the aspect of continuity of certain structures.

4.2.4 Place Attachment and Family Continuity

A significant motivational factor that distinguishes second home tourism from travels abroad is place attachment. The role of second homes as a place of one's roots or as a place for childhood's sunny holidays is significant with regards to second homes' social environment (Pitkänen & Vepsäläinen, 2010). Whereas visits to foreign – and why not domestic but unknown - destinations are often motivated by the hopes of experiencing something that is new, different and exotic and getting oneself familiar with various cultures, second home tourists are attached to the cottage. In her study of second homes in tourist life stories, Tuulentie (2007) discovered that in many cases trips abroad were described as part of the habitual way of modern Finnish life with no sign of strong place attachment. Similarly to Stedman (2006), second home owners are not "newcomers" but *attached to* and *involved in* the setting of the second home. Stedman criticises the assumption that mobile people – including those with multiple homes – would not develop strong attachments to their temporary residences. He argues that, on the contrary, mobility may foster greater attachment because people can choose places that best suit them. Great place attachment can be also motivated by the fact that many summer cottages are self-built by the owners, and further developed for changing needs e.g. when children grow up and visits of grandchildren become current. Maintenance of the cottage and its surroundings are also a significant part of the cottage life. (Alasuutari & Alasuutari, 2010.) On the other hand, Pitkänen and Vepsäläinen (2008) argue that whereas the active cottage users of today might experience a strong place attachment, future users are likely to lack the equivalent experience for the reason that they do not have their roots set in the countryside.

5 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In the fifth section of the paper I will deliver the results from the empirical data collection process regarding the aim of this research which is to increase understanding of today's second home phenomenon in Finland.

5.1 Interviews: Motivation for Second Home Tourism

The final constituent in the interview design process is that of interpreting the data that was gathered during interviews. Now the researcher – I – must make sense out of what was just uncovered and compile the data into sections or groups of information, also known as themes or codes (Creswell, 2003 & 2007 in Turner, 2010:759). Interview answers of this study soon started to repeat after one another, which led to recognising codes. These codes were found in common, repeated phrases around the motivational factors of second home tourism.

To begin with, the empirical findings of people's preferences with regards to summer cottages support the general tourist motivators found in several sources. For example Hall & Müller, 2004; Pitkänen, 2008; Pitkänen & Vepsäläinen, 2008; Sievänen et.al., 2007; and Mansfeld, 1992 have argued that behind the general tourism motivation is one's need to escape the everyday life. "A means to get away from the everyday life" was also a commonly used phrase for why summer cottages are important to the participants of this study.

5.1.1 The Escape to Nature and Wilderness

"It's all about the nature." (Young adult)

For example Sievänen et al. (2007) have stated that experiences offered by the natural environment are described in many ways, not only in actions such as berry and

mushroom picking and wandering in the forests but also as observations or sense perceptions. Whereas the change of scenery offered “a way out” for tourists in general, one common nominator for summer cottage escapism arisen in this study is nature. It served as the most significant factor determining second homes, and was equally emphasised within all respondent groups.

Nature with forests and lakes as the landscape for cottage proved to be a commonly shared necessity by all respondents. For example, when asked if the interviewees were attracted in cottage life and for what particular reason, following statements - among others - were received:

“Closeness to nature, cottage in the middle of a forest.” (Retiree)

“It’s the nature, a place where to relax.” (Working adult)

However, what people actually interpreted desirable in the nature, had more diversity. Several individuals of the two oldest age groups stated that a summer cottage’s natural environment with too many signs of human hand was undesirable. To them the surroundings should be kept as natural as possible. One of the young adults, on the other hand, had some conditions for the nature; she pointed out that there shouldn’t be “anything nasty like a swamp” in the surroundings and added that she enjoyed being at a cottage as long as there are “not too many bugs and the sun is shining”. Moreover, the cottage plot as the setting for outdoor activities and an opportunity to fish at the lake proved to be enough nature for the teenagers. All and all, respondents preferred that neighbouring cottages would be nowhere near:

“To me, nature is the most essential part of cottage life. To have a lake, peace and nature...one can have her own peace and not care about neighbours.” (Working adult)

When it comes to simply escaping the city life, following reasoning behind the attraction were common:

“One can get away from the everyday life at a cottage, one can relax and forget about all the rest.” (Working adult)

“Because I can tear myself away from the everyday life.” (Teenager)

“It’s so nice to get away from the ordinary life, even though we live in the countryside, but still going to cottage has its special feeling, it’s still different.” (Teenager)

5.1.2 Traditional Way of Life

“I have spent my childhood in a true summer cottage with no electricity, water had to be carried from the lake and drinking water from the well, there was no indoor toilet but an outhouse... that to me is attractive and represents what summer cottages have been in the old days and what they still should be. But if I’m totally honest, probably I would prefer to have electricity. No television, thank you, neither dishwashers and such. Sauna must be wood heated.” (Young adult)

The available theories on second home tourism represent facts of the desire for traditional summer cottage. However, for example Sievänen et.al. (2007) have pointed out that there is also a growing trend to build modern-style second homes with all the technical comforts of urban dwellings, but my investigation at hand found no traces of such. Asceticism as a part of cottage life, meaning that cottage should be kept relatively modest, was indeed a highly supported thought in respect of the interview data. It was revealed in statements such as

“A summer cottage with no conveniences is a true cottage. There is no electricity or running water. Water has to be carried in and sewage carried out. Sauna is wood heated. Food is cooked on a traditional, old fashioned wood-heated stove”. (Retiree)

“I don’t like too fancy, cottage is supposed to be cottage.” (Working adult)

Dishwashers, dryers and such were generally considered unnecessary; however television was a preferred item by many – yet it should not be kept on too much – regardless the age group. A wood-heated sauna was emphasised by all. Electricity and drinking water from a well were said to be enough by most and were especially present in the answers of the young adults, but also three of the teens:

“Some electrical equipment is good to have there, not a computer though.” (Teenager)

“As long as there’s heating and electricity. Outhouse is enough for toilet” (Teenager)

“A sort of asceticism is in relation to summer cottage life. There is no need to have everything luxus, e.g. television and computer are unnecessary at cottage. Electricity is good for practical reasons, but I can also imagine myself coping without electricity. Maybe not having electricity would take one even closer to the real cottage atmosphere.” (Young adult)

Surprisingly, two out of four retirees’ ideal summer cottage had all the comforts of the primary residence:

“The cottage should have all the comforts of today, the same as at home.” (Retiree)

This forms a contradiction for example to the findings of Sievänen et.al. (2007) and Alasuutari & Alasuutari (2010), who suggested that the older generations would be more attracted to a simple and ascetic cottage life whereas the younger generations would rather maintain the contemporary lifestyle that they are used to in the city. Therefore the finding was significant; however, considering the limited sample of four retirees, one cannot draw generalised conclusions on the group, whereas the younger generations’ preferences do indicate in favour of certain continuity in traditional structures.

Sievänen et.al. (2007) suggest that second home users are rather motivated by self-sufficiency, such as fishing and berry and mushroom picking, which further speak in favour of the importance of traditional lifestyle. Second home settings serve these purposes and this could strengthen the phenomenon. All the age group findings in my study, excluding teenagers, also seemed to favour such activities.

5.1.3 Second Home Activities

“Activities that I do are sleeping, eating, reading, fishing, bathing in the sauna and swimming.” (Young adult)

In the interviews, cottage activities were related to nature and outdoor life in general, but some differences were found between age groups, for example in what particular

activities they preferred. The oldest two age groups turned to more traditional activities such as the already mentioned berry and mushroom picking, chopping firewood and small maintenance work around the yard, whereas the youngest group didn't mention these once. They highlighted recreational activities more; outdoor sports such as badminton and football and swimming were on top of their lists. If simplified, this could imply that a generational change in cottage activities is at hand. However, young adults interestingly fell in between these two; they seemed to rate traditional and recreational activities equally important.

"Bathing in the sauna, swimming, wandering in the forest with my dog, making Muurinpohja – pancakes, reading books and picking berries." (Young adult)

In addition, one of the young adults stated, that after her teenage years her attitude towards cottage activities had changed to more "adult" direction; whereas she used to hate it that her mother forced her to go pick berries with her, she now in her late twenties considered it one of the most meaningful activities. Therefore this could indicate that one set of activities is only more significant than others in certain stages of life and that there is a structure of activities that on their part hold together the whole cottage phenomenon, as Jokinen (2002) suggested.

One common, preferred "activity" amongst respondents was inactivity. It was considered important that one should have an opportunity to be idle at the cottage and that the cottage environment would not be a "labor camp".

"To me, there would not need to be any activities. Inactivity is one of the common features in cottage life." (Young adult)

"In my opinion, there's no need for certain activities, because it's a place for rest and getting away from the everyday life, reading books is good and having friends around, having coffee and meals outdoors is very nice at the cottage." (Retiree)

However, many of the people interviewed by Alasuutari & Alasuutari (2010), had "always something going on", meaning that there were small maintenance or gardening projects under way at all times.

5.1.4 Place Attachment and Family Continuity

“It’s a place where I’ve spend decades, and built the cottage myself. I know the place so well, it has become very personal.” (Retiree)

Compared to previous research on Finnish second home phenomenon, the view that the attachment to summer cottage surroundings would be a privilege of older generations, found no ground in the study at hand. On the contrary; it was emphasised by many who were not active cottage users at the moment that the cottage meant more to them than what was maybe possible to be expressed in action. Pitkänen and Vepsäläinen (2008) argued that the active second home users of today have their roots in the countryside and are attached to the place through childhood memories. However, the second home related childhood memories of younger generations should not be disregarded either, as it became obvious during the interviews that there are strong signs of such. Why would they be somehow less significant? One of the young adults acknowledged that the family cottage was one of the few things in life that had remained unchanged, and it was possible to interpret from her statement that it was a very much appreciated thing. Perhaps people of today’s rapidly changing world desperately long for something solid and unchanging.

Furthermore, when it comes to social environment, second homes are suggested as one sort of a memorial for family history and traditional sense of community (Pitkänen & Vepsäläinen, 2010). However, only few of the respondents in the interviews directly mentioned friends and family as meaningful aspects of the cottage life. That alone would mark a notable difference compared to the investigated theories, where the togetherness of family and friends was often being highlighted. Nonetheless, evidence of the social context could be found elsewhere in the answers of several interviewees relating to activities such as making outdoor pancakes together, or playing outdoor games. One of the working adults stated that television and “other noise coming from an electrical device” were of disturbance to a face-to-face interaction with present people, making an indirect hint that the social environment was meaningful. Furthermore, human relations were discovered to be an important part of the wider meaning of second home phenomenon. Majority of the young adults, for example,

predicted that once having children, the meaning of summer cottage would grow in importance. Similarly, two retirees stated that once they had been young parents with small children, the cottage was more meaningful to them. For example, one of them said that back in the days it was important to be able to “take my little daughter away from the city during summer holidays”. Now, as a grandparent, to one retiree it was of most importance to have grandchildren visiting the cottage every summer. Controversially, two young adults implied that although they already had an access to a family summer cottage where they had spent childhood summers and which still today were their parents’ place, they would like to have their own cottages, where one could be alone in peace. One of them, who had given much time and thought to answer the questions – interviewed by e-mail – stated to question number 13 “*What is the meaning of second homes to you now? Do you think there may be a change in that in the future?*” as follows:

The thought of maybe having my own summer cottage in the future is very appealing and would be a dream come true. But thinking about the summer cottage, where I have spent my childhood summers... its importance is far beyond words. I have so many memories from there. I think the place has shaped me towards the person I am today. If I ever have children, I would like them to have all those amazing summers at the cottage too. My childhood cottage was originally my grandmother’s, whom I never met as she passed away before I was born. In a way, the cottage and the surroundings have brought her to me. Now that I think of it, why would I even want a new summer cottage with no history, when I’m so attached to the place of my childhood cottage? That is interesting... Maybe it’s the loneliness that I want, because at the family summer cottage there’s always my parents and my aunt and uncle too. Maybe I’ve become too independent to spend long periods of time under the same roof with my parents. But to put it in short, at the moment the meaning of the summer cottage is huge, has been even more so in the past and will most probably grow once again.

In the response above one can find two different, rather controversial aspects with regards to summer cottages; on one hand the respondent was very attached to her childhood cottage and felt the presence of family history being important but, on the other hand, there she was missing the solitary aspect of cottage life. Similarly, another

young adult stated that now, in his thirties, he doesn't visit the family cottage that often, because his parents are always there and he needs his own space. However, he said that once the time would come and the cottage would be passed on to him, he would never sell it.

When it comes to optional "second homes", the results strongly indicate towards continuity of the traditional phenomenon. A common understanding in second home tourism research speaks in favour of more flexible leisure time patterns, such as RVs, houseboats and caravans replacing the traditional cottage, which would imply a weaker bond to a certain place (e.g. Hall & Müller, 2004; Pitkänen & Vepsäläinen, 2008; Müller, 2007). However, these were not welcomed by the majority of the interviewees of my study. Two retirees predicted that additional forms will probably increase in numbers because, in their eyes, people of today were more reluctant to commit to the maintenance of a summer cottage. One of the teenagers had a disagreeing view but stated that perhaps summer cottages to many are too expensive to purchase and maintain in which case the optional patterns could come to question. Another teen had similar thoughts, yet the rest of the respondents were rather strict in their statements such as *"No, never"*, *"Not in my opinion"*, *"Vacation on wheels? Oh no"* and *"That would never happen"*. One of the teenagers was rather opposed to the idea, emphasising that the mentioned types of domestic travel are missing the solitary aspect of the summer cottage. Therefore, again, these views can be seen to favour the traditional second homes and reinforce the view of place attachment.

5.2 Observations

I consider that the three observations were successful in providing additional data about people's time usage at summer cottages. The differing results between the two summer observations and the one in April can simply be explained by the seasons; in the summer there are more activity options. Hence, the differences prove something of the cottages' seasonal meaning. During the complementary data collection, I observed groups in their activities at cottages, which led me to discover both similarities but also some rather contradictions between the interviews and

observations. The comparison was found useful for example in a relation to a study on second home users, where Sievänen et.al.(2007) argued that the younger generations are prone to maintain their more consumption-oriented, urban way of life when visiting a summer cottage. This could be disagreed with when it comes to the interviews, where the traditional, nature-related summer cottage life was stated desirable by most of the young. However, when considering the observational results, Sievänen et.al. get support.

5.2.1 Contradictions between interviews and observations

It became clear in the interviews, that television, computers and such technical devices were better left in the city home and outdoor activities were emphasised as decent for cottage surroundings. Or to be more precise, it was acceptable to have a television but it shouldn't have been watched. However, during the observation in April 2011, television was kept on at all times when the group was indoors. The youngest two teenagers played video games while the oldest teen had taken his laptop to the cottage. It was switched on most of the time for music, videos and social media. Outdoor games were hardly played; the teenagers jumped on a trampoline few times and one of the working adults played darts for a while. The working adults and young adults took a long walk in the nature twice. The oldest of the teenagers joined one of the walks. These constructed the rather poor amount of outdoor activities in April, considering that the interviews indicated outdoor activities to be the main activities at a cottage. However that could have been due to a windy and chilly, although sunny weather. A quad bike was driven by two of the teenagers. Alcohol consumption among the adults could be stated to have been heavy, however neatly handled. It clearly formed an important part of the stay, however, it wasn't talked about in the interviews except by two retirees who mentioned alcohol consumption unsuitable for cottage life. In other groups, it was mentioned only few times as *beer* was on four of the adults' lists of cottage activities. Therefore it is surprising that in practice, alcohol took a quite significant role during the weekend in April. Also, during an overnight visit in the summer, it was observed that alcohol consumption seemed to form an important part

of the cottage experience. On the other hand, during the one-day visit it wasn't present.

The social context of cottage life was directly mentioned only by few in the interviews. However, during all the visits at cottages the author observed that it was important for the groups to do things together. Walks in the nature were made, teenagers played video games together, meal preparation happened together as well as dining. Flowers got planted and small maintenance work was done together by cottage hosts and their visitors. Bathing in the sauna was put into practice in separate groups of women and men or in couples and this was done every day. Also board and card games constituted a significant part of every visit.

Therefore it is interesting why for example alcohol was left unmentioned, so was the importance of the social context. One could ask if the deep roots of summer cottage phenomenon have reached the point where they produce certain sets of answers. In other words, did the respondents of the study feel a need to give certain, *assumed* answers – to which alcohol is not supposed to belong – which then resulted in unified interviews but very controversial results in relation to the observation? Or, can some things be so self-evident, that in the interviews they were left unmentioned for the obviousness – such as the importance of social context?

5.2.2 Similarities between interviews and observations

Bathing in the sauna was enjoyed by all during observations and was present in the interviews. Swimming in the lake was essential for many, never mind that there was still ice in the water in April. As 2011 was a good and warm summer, swimming was a big part of both summer visits. Also picking berries was essential during the one day visit, as this happened in July when the blueberries were ripe.

Activities such as swimming, picking berries and outdoor games are very much seasonal. Therefore it is understandable that observation in April lacked many of these. Sauna is generally recognised as one of the most identifying Finnish things and especially associated with summer cottage phenomenon. Bathing in the sauna was actively practised and mentioned by every respondent in the interviews, but only on

their lists of cottage activities or when asked what the concept of *summer cottage* brings to their mind. Interestingly, the importance of sauna was left unhighlighted and it wasn't approached with deeper conversations. In practice, heating the sauna and bathing appeared to form a very big part of the cottage experience. Therefore it could again come to the fact, that something is too obvious to be explained. How does one explain something that in their mind is as natural as getting up in the morning for work?

5.3 Summary: Empirical Findings

To remind the reader, this thesis does not aim to make precise age comparisons. However, since the research questions were

(A) Why are Finns motivated to have and visit second homes?

(A.a) What do Finns think of second homes?

(A.b) How can second home phenomenon be expected to evolve?

it is of relevance to highlight the few diversities between age groups amongst the results. To sum up, there were not many striking divergences in people's perceptions. The most significant difference between people of different ages was found regarding interview questions 10 and 11. The group of retirees saw no need for additional type of holidays, whereas young adults and teenagers didn't want to compromise between second home and for example trips abroad. To them, it wasn't a matter of either or, as they thought they can have them both. Working adults, however, recognised the financial limitations of "having it all".

Interestingly, when asked how an ideal cottage should be equipped, half of the retirees preferred to have all the comforts of modern life, whereas most of the other age groups wanted to keep it as simple as possible. Maybe simplicity at cottage is valued by younger groups for the reason that it forms the most contrast to their hectic and over-materialised everyday life. Furthermore, perhaps older age sets limitations to how primitive the conditions for one can be.

When asked if it is important to have a cottage near ones primary residence, there was again some diversity in the answers. Working adults considered that having a cottage relatively near, would enable frequent visits. This is understandable as they are in working life. For retirees distance didn't play a huge role, as they don't work and they "have time to travel". Many respondents in the youngest two age groups seemed to think about it in a way, that the further the cottage is from home, the more one can get a feeling of actually "getting away".

6 CONCLUSION

Since the results have been revealed in the previous chapter, this section of the paper concentrates on answering the research questions and discussing the future development of second homes. As was explained in the introduction of the paper, answering sub-question (A.a) works both ways towards the main research question (A) and sub-question (A.b).

6.1 Research Question (A)

Why are Finns motivated to have and visit second homes? As no surprise, closeness to nature was found a common motivator for second home tourism within the responses. Two specific details of nature, lake and forest, form the perfect setting for successful cottage life. They are what people lack in their usual environment and what makes the cottage surroundings special. Clean air and peace were likewise recognised as motives for second home tourism.

According to the interviews, an “easy getaway” motivated respondents. Summer cottages offer people an easy escape from the city. At cottages, people seem to have another reality and everyday worries are left behind. It was said by many that the cottage should be far enough from the everyday environment, since already the car drive to the cottage acts as a transition rite.

In addition to escapism, respondents seem to be motivated to spend time at cottages for the reason that the cottage environment gives them opportunities to perform tasks and activities that would not be possible in the city. Similarly, many city activities are not possible at a cottage, which was seen positive. Also the feeling of the past and traditionality, with a hint of romanticism, were considered motivating.

6.2 Research Question (A.a)

What do Finns think of second homes? Within several differently formulated statements respondents generally considered summer cottages to significantly characterise what is *Finnish*. The author was touched of how unified the views were in this respect, from the interviewee of 13 years to the one of 72. Interview participants regarded second homes to be places of nature-related life, peace and simple activities. Work stress and other worries are not a part of cottage life. Based on the findings presented in this thesis, second homes continue to be meaningful to Finns, however, there is some diversity in the valuations of second homes which was noted to depend on the age of respondents. For example the more recreational activity preferences of the teenagers and some of the young adults' perceptions of what is regarded as desirable cottage nature, speak in favour of the differing perceptions. On the other hand, young adults often formed a bridge between the teenagers and older generations, for example in activity preferences, which on its part could imply that the overall values themselves remain relatively unchanged but instead individuals change along with the cottage structure, and preferences depend on their phase in life. To simplify, if a similar study was made in 50 years time, the teenagers of today would be the retirees of the future with perhaps similar thoughts and attitudes as the retirees of today now have.

6.3 Research Question (A.b)

How can second home phenomenon be expected to evolve? In this respect, the responses of the two youngest groups were found especially relevant. According to this study, teenagers and young adults of today consider second homes desirable. Several of the young respondents made remarks how they would at some point want to have their own cottage or hoped to have their parents' cottage passed on to them later in life. Many believed that having children in the future would probably increase the importance of having an access to a summer cottage. However, the future buyers and users of second homes are unlikely to settle for only one set of holidays; based on the interviews it became very clear that this generation wants to have both the

summer cottage and trips abroad. It was also evident that they didn't see why there should be a choice between the two. It would be interesting to find out which option they will choose if/when they have to.

To conclude, as nature – with activities offered by the cottage environment – and escapism are motivating factors of cottage life to the participants of this study, why would that change in the future? If anything, it is possible that the interest towards second homes would only increase, due to decreasing green space, increasing world population and growing urban centres. Partly for these facts, it was predicted by some respondents that summer cottages may not only stay as meaningful to them but also grow in importance.

Discussion regarding the future of second homes will further continue in the next paragraph.

6.4 Future Implications for Second Homes

Despite the fact that there seems to be rather pessimistic views among researchers on the future importance of the second home phenomenon, and although I do understand some of them, as the interviewer of twenty-one people and analyser of the interviews, however, I must also argue against. The findings of the empirical part showed only little indication of second homes suffering a decline in importance in the future. What differentiated most between ages were activity preferences. But can one make rightful conclusions about the future state of second homes based on activity preferences? Aren't they more dependent on certain phases in life rather than due to changes in human mentality? I would consider place attachment and nature related views more significant when predicting the future of second homes.

The findings of this study support both the research of Blazey (1992) on retirees' leisure time habits and Pizam et.al. (2004) who studied young adults' travel behaviour. All the retirees of the study stated that they had no desire to travel abroad as long as they had an access to a cottage. Domestic destinations were not as strictly opposed, but still rather unnecessary. Younger generations, on the other hand, were generally

rather interested in discovering foreign destinations and learn about different cultures. At their stage of life, most of them didn't want to compromise between cottage and other type of tourism. They didn't see the two as exclusive. However, when it comes to trips abroad, second home tourism was already contested in the 1980s when international charter tourism became a competitive alternative to domestic second home tourism (Müller, 2007). Interestingly, 1980s in Finland was also when the construction and purchase of second homes was at its highest speed. Therefore I would argue that this on its part proves something of the importance of second homes in the Finnish folklore, despite the foreign alternatives.

Nevertheless, the young's general travelling preferences and willingness to travel abroad should not be seen as an indication of summer cottages being less meaningful to them than what they are to older generations. It could, actually, indicate towards something quite the opposite; proverbs such as "absence makes the heart grow fonder" and "one has to go far to see near" could be taken in the sense that Finland's domestic options might even grow in importance when travelling around the world.

If any conclusion can be drawn from the fact that future cottage users and owners also want to have holidays at foreign destinations, it is that maybe summer cottages in the future are increasingly just *summer* cottages, and trips abroad are taken in winters. It could increase the seasonal use of cottages, differing from the trend of today, that cottages are built winter proof because most holidays are spent there.

Furthermore, although played no significant role in this study but was indirectly approached during the empirical data collection, the aspect of global warming can increase the relevance of second homes. One could for example argue in favour of domestic tourism due to more awareness of the impacts of outbound travel. Also the opportunity for self-sufficient way of life offered by most second home environments will be increasingly appealing due to the same awareness, not to mention the demand for open space.

6.5 Suggestions for Future Research

This study did not consider people's backgrounds in relation to their thoughts. As for future research, more fundamental results could be gained if additional factors – such as gender, profession and whether respondents have belonged to a cottage owning household as a child – were included. Also more observations on the side of qualitative interviews would bring deeper knowledge, as well as an additional quantitative method. Because there are four very distinct seasons in Finland, to study the differences between the seasonal meanings of cottages would be a valuable addition to the second home research. Although this study included respondents of several ages, it was not a comparative study between generations; therefore it would be interesting to study the phenomenon from a viewpoint of age comparison.

As it was mentioned earlier in the text, it would be difficult to find Finns with no experience and connection to summer cottages, but they must be out there somewhere. Therefore it would be interesting to study only their perceptions of the phenomenon and perhaps compare them to the findings of, for example, this study. Also, as people of older ages have been better covered in second home research, maybe a study that includes only young people would be relevant in determining future. Focusing only on certain age group would enable a bigger sample and thus more comprehensive results.

As one of the revealing of this study was that younger people would not be happy summer cottage users on the expense of trips abroad, another future research could combine these two aspects. For example, there could be a study that on one hand would collect quantitative data of summer cottage owners' trips abroad during their ownership and on the other hand make qualitative interviews of this specific question. It would be informative on how cottage ownership or ability to use a cottage does affect the amount of holidays abroad. It would also be interesting to compare the number of trips abroad taken by cottage-goers and non-cottage goers. Yet another comparative study could be made between second home cultures of, for example, Finland and Sweden or, more interestingly, Finland and the USA.

7 REFLECTION OF THE THESIS PROCESS

In order to learn from the thesis process, a revision of the empirical part as well as my own contribution becomes relevant. There were 21 interviews of which six were done by e-mail. It turned out, that respondents who sent their answers via e-mail gave the most comprehensive statements. This was likely due to having more time to think their answers, although face-to-face or telephone respondents were not rushed either. Hence, if the research was done again, I would consider conducting all the interviews via email. Also the fact that the interviewees were my acquaintances may have affected the quality of the face-to-face interviews; I acknowledged that some respondents were rather nervous during the interviews, whereas it may have been easier for them to talk if the interviewer had been a stranger.

In a similar study in the future, perhaps the interviews and observations could be entwined in a way that “interviews” would take place during the observations, in a conversational manner without respondents knowing about it. It could be that this would give more comprehensive results. On the other hand, it could also seem as if the participants were “tricked” into a research, which naturally would be a little questionable.

It was also noted that some respondents were not especially interested to give answers. One interview lacked so much participation that I decided to add a complementary interview. Few interviewees also seemed to think that the interview questions were a little silly and the subject too self-evident for needing to be studied. For example questions 10 and 11 about second home tourism’s relation to other types of tourism were considered odd. Also question 13 about the meaning of summer cottages to the respondent seemed strange to non-cottage owners. To make a research with specific target group, for example that only cottage owners were studied, would help to avoid “silly” and “odd” questions. Therefore if a similar research

project was initiated I might give an advice to condense the study to include, for example, only young adults.

As the interviews turned out relatively short in practice, approximately 10 minutes each, it brings about the question, whether interviewees revealed their true minds or if they only gave answers that they are supposed to give. As the second home phenomenon is a social construction, it may also construct certain set of answers. In other words, what people may have learnt to be the “right ways” and the “wrong ways”, may differ from their actual opinions. Therefore additional attention could be paid to formulate questions more cleverly to get people really consider and open up.

To enable the reader to make rightful evaluation of the thesis results, it shall be noted that since I have a strong bond to the second home phenomenon and personally value the culture highly, a danger of bias in analysing and interpreting the empirical findings is present. This was of course recognised and I have done my best to minimise the effects of subjectivity. Furthermore, when it comes to the observations, as I was a part of the observational surroundings, it has to be acknowledged that I may have affected what was done at the cottage, for example with suggestions like “Shall we go for a swim?” or “Who wants to play darts?”. However, being a participative observer, I couldn't have behaved any differently than I normally would in cottage surroundings.

As a private person my own thoughts of second homes have been strong; for example, I have an opinion on how a real summer cottage should look like, how it should be equipped, what are genuine cottage activities and what are not. I have considered the phenomenon as one of the most certain, unchanging things in life. However, as a researcher I was forced to put my opinions aside and concentrate on the facts that were given to me in the empirical findings. During the thesis process I was obliged to get familiar with earlier second home research, design interviews, listen to my interviewees and accept the findings regardless of my own perceptions. Therefore, having done all this has shaped my view on second homes to a more objective direction and increased my understanding of the phenomenon, which to me is a victory itself.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Questions

1. What associations come to your mind when you think about any summer cottage?
2. Do you think that Finnish second homes are significant in relation to national identity? Why or why not?
3. How often do you have the opportunity to visit a cottage, your own or someone else's?
4. Are you attracted by summer cottage living? Why or why not?
5. In your opinion, could traditional summer cottage ownership be replaced by for example timeshares, rental cottages, urban second homes or recreational vehicles (campers, boats, trailers)?
6. In your opinion, how is an ideal summer cottage equipped?
7. What sort of activities do you think are suitable for summer cottage living? Do you need something to do all the time?
8. Which type of activities do you consider unsuitable for summer cottage living?
9. How important is summer cottage's proximity to city? Why?
10. In your opinion and experience, do you consider second home tourism and other types of tourism – both inbound and outbound – as exclusive of one another?
11. In relation to question number 10, would you prioritise summer cottage living first compared to other tourism? Why or why not?
12. Is the nature (forest, lake etc.) outside the cottage yard important? Why or why not?
13. What is the meaning of second homes to you now? Do you think there may be a change in that in the future? Why or why not?

Appendix 2 – Interviews

Interviewee age groups:

Retirees – in their late 60s to early 70s

Working adults – in their 40s to early 50s

Young adults – in their 20s to early 30s

Teenagers – from 13 to 18 years of age

Interviews made face-to-face or on the telephone

Retiree

1. Cottage by a lake, wilderness lake shore, sauna, quiet nature.
2. Yes. Summer cottages are a part of the Finnish hermit-character... enables Finns to get away to the forest, Finns belong to forest.
3. When I was still in work life, I was able to go every weekend in the summer, now that I'm retired, I can go whenever.
4. Yes, when the weather is nice and it's peaceful...no dogs barking or church bells ringing.
5. Never, they could never be a substitute for cottage. Could one barbeque on a boat? Maybe, but it doesn't have the same feeling to it.
6. There's no need for inside toilet or running water, an outhouse is enough, a well is required, no dish washer and such, no tv but a radio would be good of course.
7. Small maintenance work, fishing, hanging around, reading books.
8. Having a beer at a terrace, work.
9. It is important, so one doesn't have to spend lots of time on the travel, and if there's a bad weather, one can take off and get back to the civilised world.
10. Personally, I'm happy with just the cottage, I don't need anything else – no trips abroad or within Finland.
11. Yes, definitely.
12. Yes, it's the number one. Nature is the foundation of human life. Without a well being nature, there is no well being human.

13. Yes, it will change in time. When I get older, I will most probably prefer the city life... it's easier to walk on a pavement than in the countryside, when you can't get your feet as high as you may have when you were young. In the past it was important because we wanted to take the children away from the city for summer.

Retiree

1. Finland, cottage by a lake, sauna in a separate building.
2. Yes, summer cottage culture has been there for decades...I remember from my childhood that neighbours went to the summer cottage, it belongs to the Finns and to the Finnish way of life.
3. To my own cottage, whenever in the summer, but not in the winter because it's for summer use only... in addition, I can visit my daughter's cottage which is built also for winter use... we spend our Christmases there. To my own cottage, I usually go before the midsummer and we can stay there the whole summer...except if the weather is constantly bad and rainy, then we don't stay there as long.
4. Yes it does, it's always really nice to go to the cottage as a counterbalance for the city life.
5. No, I don't think so. There's something very spiritual and soulful about the cottage. It can't be compared to for example getting on the wheels (as in RVs).
6. I think that what we have, a summer cottage with no conveniences, is a true cottage. There is no electricity, running water. Water has to be carried in and sewage out. Sauna is wood heated. Food is cooked in a traditional, old fashioned wood-heated stove.
7. In my opinion, there's no need for certain activities, because it's a place for rest and getting away from the everyday life, reading books is good and having friends around, having coffee and meals outdoors is very nice at the cottage.
8. I don't miss having television at the cottage, sometimes we don't even have the radio and we cope, I don't think listening to loud music would be suitable.

9. If one can't stay at the cottage the whole summer from spring until the autumn, then as close as possible, 50kms is a suitable distance for example if one needs to leave the cottage rather soon after arriving, for having bad weather for instance. But if it's too close, say 10kms distance, it probably wouldn't feel like going to cottage, there is a need for a little distance.
10. Not necessarily. But the travel should be within Finland, I wouldn't want to go abroad in the summer, visiting relatives elsewhere in Finland would be ok and if I may add, I would travel by train to have a peaceful look at the views from the train window.
11. Yes, if I had to choose.
12. It is important, I'd prefer not having a cottage next to another, there should be a landscape where one can freely wander, pick berries and such.
13. It still means a lot to me, it's good to go there to "charge the batteries", physical pain – that one is to have at this age – gets forgotten at the cottage environment, getting into the bare life makes some things easier to bear, and I can't wait to go there this summer too. But in the future, even though I would just as much want to go there, a lot depends on my health, because there's many physical chores there – carrying water, wood – which I've always enjoyed doing, but if they get too heavy, I might have to give up going there.

Retiree

1. I associate it with everything that is nice, one can do chores and everything, swim, bath in the sauna, fish, and chop wood for fireplace.
2. Yes I think so, they are very popular places, very Finnish, I don't know any other than Finnish cottage goers.
3. Now that I'm retired, I go there very often, depends on myself, several times a month. In the summer we live there. In the winter depends on the weather.
4. Yes. It's where I've spend decades, and built the cottage myself, I know the place so well, it's very personal.

5. I don't think so, but of course those other things are good competitors for cottages... some people like them more, maybe they will replace the quantity of cottages but only in a small extent.
6. Indoor toilet, running water, sewage, warm...I'm so old that I like those things.
7. Fishing, hunting, wandering in the forests, bathing in the sauna, swimming, chopping wood.
8. Hard to say... Drinking alcohol. Indoor activities less.
9. It's not necessary, 100kms is an ok distance. If it's rather further away from the city, one wants to go there for longer periods of time.
10. No, I'd think not. Both can happen.
11. Yes, because we have a cottage, we prefer that. We don't go to spas or anything.
12. Yes, they are important. It's good to have forest where one is free to go and wander around, also it's nice to be by the water and bigger the lake the better.
13. At this moment, it's very busy out there, we have to get the yard cleaned, we have to collect wood etc. I don't think it's changing much, as long as we can go there and maintain the place (referring to getting old).

Retiree

1. Summer.
2. Yes I think they are an essential part of Finnish mentality...Maybe because we've only just recently got out of the woods so to speak.
3. As often as I want, now that I'm retired.
4. Yes... closeness to nature, in the middle of a forest.
5. I don't think they can replace the traditional cottage, but they will increase for sure... people want to spend less time at a cottage, and timeshares for example are an answer to that... when renting, people rent for shorter periods of time nowadays, for week or two, not for the whole summer as they used to.
6. All the comforts of today, the same as at home.
7. Wandering in the nature, picking berries and mushrooms but not too much, there must be peace too, just hanging around.

8. Television, drinking alcohol isn't suitable.
9. Not important anymore, that I'm retired, I have time to travel...when I was working, it was important to get there quickly.
10. Not exclusive, but cottage does tie you a little so it does lessen the need for other travel.
11. Yes, I'm not keen on travelling, so cottage life suits me... I haven't had very pleasurable experiences on other travel.
12. Yes, I think neighbours should be off relative distance because peace and quiet and nature are what one seeks from cottage. The lake is important, so is the environment and animals in the nature to look at
13. When I'm too old to do chores at the cottage, then I think I won't be as interested in going there. I want to have something to do. That decreases by the age, and will stop eventually...not depending so much on the age, but on health.

Working adult

1. Lake, beach, pier, sun...things related to summer.
2. Yes, it's just an essential part of Finnish folklore...hard to explain.
3. About 4 times a year...midsummer, ski holiday, autumn holiday, may day celebration.
4. Yes, one can get away from the everyday life at a cottage, one can relax and forget about all the rest.
5. I don't think so, not in my opinion, they are so different...maybe in the future, but hard to say.
6. I don't like too fancy, cottage is supposed to be cottage... Dish washer is good, running water, electricity...but still modest.
7. There shouldn't be too much things going on, cottage life to me is very much about relaxing and just hanging around, reading is good, outdoor games, sun bathing, swimming, fishing are good activities.
8. No tennis or golf court for sure! No carrying out different tasks... Computer, video games.

9. Not too close, 20-50 km but not more than 50km because if it's too far away, then one cannot visit there as often.
10. In a way yes but then again no... maybe one would travel in the winter and spend summer at the cottage, it is a commitment to have a cottage.
11. Depends where my primary residence would be...if I lived in the city centre, I would definitely want a cottage and then it would be of my first priority, then I probably would not plan travel abroad, and even if I did, a week at Tenerife for example could never measure up to having your own cottage, where you can visit frequently.
12. Yes, to me it's the most essential part of cottage life...to have a lake, peace and nature...one can have her own peace and not care about neighbours.
13. Peace, relaxation. I don't think it will change in the future.

Working adult

1. Sun and sauna.
2. Yes...they just are.
3. A few times a year.
4. Yes...it's just a part of this Finnish character of mine, it's the nature, a place where to relax.
5. No.
6. Electricity, inside toilet is a bonus but not a must.
7. No activities are needed, making fire wood is enough.
8. Golf, tennis.
9. Not important, but it can't be too far away either...max 50km.
10. No, they're so different.
11. No...it's as important to go abroad than be at a cottage.
12. Yes...very hard to define why... picking berries, fishing etc.
13. Hard to say what it means, not much, even harder to say if it might change in the future.

Working adult

1. Paalijärvi, our own summer cottage, good feeling, our own lovely and special place, peace.
2. I think so yes, in Finland it's the thing, there's always been cottages and I think there always will be, maybe their significance will even grow in the future...people will increasingly want their own summer cottage.
3. Every day, because we live pretty near...basically in the weekends, and in the summer we are always there, we even travel to work from there.
4. Yes, because we have one and it's near to our primary residence, it's a place where I can relax and get away from the everyday life as soon as we drive to the yard.
5. In my opinion no, but I do understand people who might prefer that as well... I have grown to the summer cottage culture, and therefore its status to me is very different than it may be to someone else, who has for example sailed from childhood.
6. I have two aspects to this. On one hand I wanted many comforts to our cottage, but on the other hand the idea of a non-equipped cottage somewhere in the wild with sauna, fireplace and a lake attracts me too. At a very primitive cottage the meaning of people and company would increase a lot, when there would be no tv and such, people would have to talk to one another. This means I would want two different cottages!
7. Fishing, gardening (meaning yard maintenance), outdoor games such as badminton... lake is very essential, it's not a summer cottage if there's no lake, one has to be able to go swimming and rowing on a boat.
8. Water scooters... I dislike things that pollute the nature. But otherwise people are free to do what they want on their free time. Tennis and golf courts I dislike.
9. Now that we have the cottage near to our home, I wouldn't change it to anything. It enables frequent visits.
10. Maybe at some point in life...when you have a bank loan for a house, for a cottage and for car(s), there's hardly money to travel, and maybe not interest either...but

once you have paid the loans, maybe then... I think it's more or less about people's financial situation.

11. Yes, if I had to choose between the two.
12. Yes, I can't imagine having a cottage in a cottage village or that I would have to socialise with many neighbours. One has to be able to relax. Clean lake and forest are what I value.
13. It's a place for free time, very important to us... maybe it will change when my son grows up and won't go with us as much... maybe we will do other travelling too in the future, but maybe we will spend more time at the cottage because we can go to work from there and wouldn't have to worry about my son's school... I think we will always have the city home, but then it would be the second home and cottage the first! We will see.

Working adult

1. Free-time, holiday.
2. Yes, to Finns, because there's so many cottages in Finland by lakes, people want to go to lakeside.
3. Every week.
4. Yes, one can get away from the everyday life.
5. No, definitely not, not in the future either.
6. Ideal cottage would have all the comforts, just like at home.
7. All kinds of chores, including making fire wood for winter, fishing as a hobby... but there's no need to have something to do all the time.
8. I can't think of any.
9. No need to be close to the town, but should be pretty close to home... so we can use the cottage more.
10. No, of course not...it's good to have other types of holidays too.
11. Yes, if I had to choose.
12. Yes, definitely...for picking berries and it brings peace to have nature close.

13. It's a place for my family where we spend almost all of our free-time... I don't think the meaning will change much, maybe we get to use it more, depending on how my son has hobbies.

Teenager

1. Summer and lake.
2. Yes, to some...it's very Finnish, but it's not that identifying to me.
3. Quite often, a few times a year.
4. Not really... because my family lives at countryside so it's not that special... if our home didn't have electricity, it would be a summer cottage...maybe it's more important to city people.
5. Maybe, perhaps it's the increased mobility that attracts people.
6. Electricity, indoor toilet, road, sauna, warm and drinkable water from tap.
7. Light sporting and games with friends, no need to have things happening all the time, cooking, reading.
8. Is there any?
9. I think the idea is, that the cottage would not be too close to the city...that it would differ from the city life, the distance is irrelevant, relevant is how the cottage life and environment differs from the city... But it should be worth travelling, meaning that one can go even for a weekend and not spend the whole time in a car.
10. No. Maybe it's a financial thing.
11. No, definitely not... I appreciate travels abroad more than cottage life.
12. Yes...the environment must enjoyable and peaceful, because the cottage is mainly a place for relaxation and calming down.
13. Not much, hard to say if it will change...maybe in a 25 years time, if I live in the city, I might want my own summer cottage...But most probably I will not have it.

Teenager

1. Holiday, vacation.
2. Yes. It has become a tradition. At least in my eyes, and what I know about it.
3. Well, every weekend that I am free from my hockey practice. And in the summer we go more, when schools are out and I have less hockey.
4. Yes. Because I can tear myself away from the everyday life. To relax and do things that would not be possible to do in town.
5. No.
6. Some electrical equipment are good to have there, not a computer though. But tv and general equipment in the kitchen, e.g. fridge. Other than that, I wouldn't like it to be too primitive. But it doesn't have to have everything that we have at home(=primary residence).
7. Fishing, swimming, playing games, jumping on the trampoline and such. Most of the times I do want to do something, not just 'be', but I can do that too sometimes.
8. Being indoors. Mainly things should happen outdoors. I wouldn't want to spend much time indoors.
9. It is pretty important. It would be boring to have the cottage for example in Inari (the most northern municipality in Finland, more than 1000km away from the respondent's primary residence), where I could maybe visit twice a year.
10. A little. A hard question.
11. Well, I'd rather not do just one thing. Depends on the situation, sometimes I wouldn't even want to go e.g. abroad, but sometimes I feel there's not much to do at the summer cottage. Depends on the mood.
12. Yes. It's good to be able to go outside the cottage yard, for example to fish, where there's no one there.

Teenager

1. Holiday, swimming, bathing in the sauna, summer.
2. Yes, so many people have a cottage, it seems pretty self-evident.

3. A few times a year. Because I play ice hockey and have many practices, it depends on them, especially this summer I have lots...in July I want to go to my grandmother's and cousin's cottages.
4. Yes... it's so nice to get away from the ordinary life, even though we live in the countryside, but still going to cottage has its special feeling, it's still different.
5. Maybe yes, maybe people can't afford their own cottage and prefer other types of holidays...and not everyone bother driving to a cottage, if it would be relatively far away.
6. Computer is not needed, nor is television. I'm happy as long as there's heating and electricity. Outhouse is enough.
7. Fishing, swimming, bathing in the sauna, football and other outdoor games.
8. Computer games, and being inside.
9. It doesn't have to be close to city, maybe it's good that it would be far away so one can really relax and calm down, brings the feeling of being at cottage.
10. I don't think so, they are so different.
11. Yes I think so, it would be the priority...one doesn't need to worry about luggage and such, and one can spend more time there than a week at Tenerife per year.
12. Pretty important, to have forest and lake, would be nice not to have neighbours too near.
13. To me it's very important to have an access to a cottage and I want to go every summer. I think it will stay as important in the future, I will most probably want my own summer cottage in the future, say in 20-30 years time.

Young adult

1. Lake, sun, beach.
2. Yes...it just is. We have so many lakes and cottages. It's almost too self-evident to be explained.
3. Every weekend in the summer.
4. Yes, as long as I don't have to do too many chores there... of course I can sometimes work there, but most of the time I would just like to relax... I can calm

down there and be in peace, there's no city hassle there, one can forget about work there.

5. I don't think so... at a cottage, gardening and other outdoor chores are important to many, which are not possible e.g. in camper vans and such. No, I don't see that happening.
6. Electricity is essential. Outhouse is enough as long as it's not too far away from the cottage! There should be either running water or a well. No dishwashers and such.
7. Outdoor games...gardening and minor outdoor chores, swimming, bathing in the sauna. Not too much to do... It's good to be able to just be.
8. Work stuff, computer... too much television, there can be a tv but one shouldn't watch it all the time, no planned activities, no schedules.
9. It should be close enough for weekend visits. But should be far enough for the countryside feeling. So depends on the landscape too, one must get the feeling of going to and being at a cottage, which in Finland is quickly achieved; from any big city it takes no longer than half an hour to be in a totally different landscape.
10. No. One can easily go to cottage for only a weekend, trips abroad are usually for longer periods and should be planned in advance. So for example in the summer, one has plenty of time to do both, go to cottage and abroad or elsewhere in Finland. The cottage is there, it's very easy to go there, it doesn't have to be planned ahead, tickets booked etc.
11. No, I don't think so. Well...if I knew for sure that it would be sunny and warm, and no bugs, then I would always choose the cottage. But since it can never be like that...No, at this point it would not be my priority.
12. Yes, it should be a nice surrounding, no swamps or anything... The plot should be big enough, no neighbours too close.
13. It's nice to be able to go to cottage, it's important. But I wouldn't die if I couldn't go there. I think it will grow in importance in the future...if I have kids someday, it will be good to be able to go to a cottage with them. I guess at that point, trips abroad would be less significant and cottage more important, for the kids. So the family could get away from the city. But now I'd rather do trips abroad as well.

Young adult

1. An island, water, pier, asceticism, holiday.
2. Yes, it's so common and everyone loves them, it's our thing.
3. Not very often, a few times per summer.
4. Yes, it's something... it's so relaxing and so different than being at home...to compare a weekend spent at home or at a cottage, you get the feeling of a holiday when you go to cottage... there's no city activities at cottage, and one can forget about work and stuff.
5. Hard to say...maybe. Perhaps those things that you listed are somehow easier...you don't have to maintain them as much. People of today want to get easy. There's less responsibility for example in a rental cottage...you don't have to worry how the cottage is doing in the winter.
6. Indoor toilet, running water, electricity... no dishwashers and such.
7. There's no need to have lots of activities at a cottage...one good activity is lying on the cottage pier by the water... boating, fishing, swimming...outdoor things in general, picking berries and mushrooms of course.
8. I don't know. Very hard to say. Video games and computers? At least I don't think they are the best choice.
9. Pretty important...I wouldn't want to put much energy to the travel itself, it should be rather close to enable frequent, short visits.
10. No. Even if you have a cottage, you don't have to be there all the time. Especially when cottage is more or less a summer thing, and trips abroad would be made in the winter. You can have both.
11. No. If I had to choose, I'd take other trips.
12. Yes. A lake is a must, and a forest-like plot, your own peace.
13. It's nice to go to friends' cottages for a weekend or so...but it's not that meaningful at the moment. Maybe it will change, I can't say really. To some people it is self-evident to get a cottage at some point in life, but to me it's not. I have never thought or dreamt about it. Maybe I could have a timeshare cottage together with my parents and siblings.

Young adult

1. Sauna, lake, peaceful nature, beer, barbeque.
2. Yes. Hard to explain why, seems such a self-evident thing. Perhaps, when thinking about Finland, what comes to mind first are sauna by the lake, lake, forest and such.
3. Perhaps at least once a month on average, maybe even more frequently. The opportunities are equal no matter the season, but in the summer I do visit cottages more.
4. Yes. It gives me a chance to relax and forget about the mayhem in towns. It's a get away from the everyday life.
5. No. I don't see any of them replacing the traditional cottage. At least I can't imagine it for myself. Maybe in addition to the summer cottage.
6. In my opinion, a sort of asceticism is in relation to summer cottage life. There is no need to have everything luxus, e.g. tv or computer is unnecessary at cottage. Electricity is good for practical reasons, but I can also imagine myself coping without electricity. Maybe not having electricity would take one even closer to the real cottage atmosphere. Having drinking water would be necessary; it doesn't have to come running, but I would want at least a well or spring, I would dislike carrying drinking water from town or to buy it in store. To have the cottage winter-equipped, would be practical. It would increase the use. Heating could be only dependent on capacitive fireplace and airtight walls.
7. To me, there would not need to be any activities. Inactivity is one of the common features in cottage life. Of course there lots of things one can do. Visionally for example fishing is a common cottage activity; however I am not a devoted fisher myself. Going to sauna, rowing a boat are what I like. Also general maintenance of the cottage and cutting wood are included in the activities. Depending where the cottage is located, hiking in the surrounding nature, picking berries and mushrooms. Also cooking summery food, e.g. barbequing outside and making Muurinpohjalettuja (=pan cakes made outside on a special wide pan).
8. Today's entertainment. E.g. television, video games, surfing on the internet.

9. It's not important to be close to town. Rather it's important to have the cottage far enough, in the nature. However, for practical reasons it can't be too far away from the primary residence, so that the trip would not be unreasonably long. Weekend visits should be possible and meaningful.
10. No, in principle. In practice, they do give limitations to one another. Leisure time and money able to spend to leisure time are limited, so of course one needs to make choices. But of course having a summer cottage decreases the need and pressure to go on travel both abroad and home country, because then you already have a solid place to go to when you need to escape the everyday life. But I don't see summer cottages substituting other types of tourism. They serve different interests.
11. Challenging question. Very hard to answer in a precise way. They're not exclusive. But if I must rate them, perhaps the summer cottage would come first. At least if I had my own summer place.
12. Yes. The nature gives a landscape for the cottage. Also I feel it important to be able to wander in the nature around the cottage. Walks with my dog in the forest nearby the cottage. In that sense the surrounding nature and cottage's location are important. Not only the plot is significant.
13. At the moment it means that I can visit relatives' and friends' cottages, since I don't have my own. In that respect, it also means socialising with people. But of course that also means, that I can't really relax and be in my own peace, as what I would do if I had my own summer cottage. Therefore the meaning would change, if I had my own place. The experience would be different then. And more important.

Young adult

1. Holiday, free time spent together with people, summer.
2. Yes it's a strong character of Finnish culture, it is very rare to meet someone who wouldn't have any contact with a cottage, it is very relevant feature.

3. In the summer, I could go whenever, but because it's rather far away and I don't have a car, I manage to go there a few times each summer...sounds bad doesn't it. I could go more, if I bothered to make the effort.
4. Yes, it's a way to loosen oneself from the everyday life, but there are some things at the cottage, e.g. the outhouse, that I'm not so keen on. But I do like going to cottage...though I wouldn't want to spend the whole summer there.
5. Not entirely no, I think people want to hold on to the more traditional ways.
6. Running water, electricity, television, outhouse, stove and fridge of course, wood heated stove would be lovely, if one knew how to use it.
7. Television, radio, boating, fishing, outdoor games, board games.
8. Computer, video games.
9. If it's close (less than 2 hrs), one needs to put less effort in going there. And there would be more time left to spend at the cottage, when one doesn't need to spend much time on the travel, e.g. when you go only for the weekend, you want the majority of the two days to be spent at the cottage, not in the car.
10. No. They are so different.
11. No I wouldn't. I think one can have both. They are so different things.
12. Yes. For example, at my family's summer place there is only so little forest left, everything else is cut down and made into villa plots. That annoys me. But the world is changing, and we can't always have it our way can we?
13. Summer cottage to me is about spending a holiday... it's where I have spent my childhood summers, I would like to take care of the place and update it a little, but I can't afford it myself and also, there are so many people using the cottage, that it's not so simple to start transforming it, when it's really not only mine. I hope the cottage will stay as special to me as it has done by far, I think it will. It's one of the few things in my life that has always stayed the same.

Interviews made by email

Young adult

1. I think of relaxing, spending time with family and friends, eating good food, drinking beer or wine or lonkero. Also growing up in the archipelago, the sea is important. I have a hard time seeing a second home without the water, like in the forest. But I think that's mostly because of the way I grew up. Sauna and fishing, off course. It is a way off escaping the everyday stress. We don't have electricity or running warm water, so no tv, internet or hot showers. But that's okay, that's how it's suppose to be when you are there!
2. National identity? In one way yes, for me nature is a big part of my identity so therefore being closer to nature and living in your cottage is important for my well being. Again something I believe have to do with where I grew up. Someone who was brought up in the city might not feel the same, or they even might have a stronger need to visit nature. For me it's a necessity. Finland is a big country with lots of nature and I assume it's a part of every Finns identity.
3. A couple of times each summer, it depends on how much free time I have. But I try to go at least 3, 4 times. Right now, I live to far away (in a other country) to go as often as I would like.
4. Yes, having a place to just be. A place where the outside world can't effect you as much.
5. As summer cottages is a place for me to get away from the everyday life, then I believe it's a personal taste. I prefer hanging out at our cottage, but perhaps someone else can get that same feeling of relaxation on a camper or a trailer. For me it would not be the same, but I am so used to our cottage life. I wouldn't mind trying a trailer for vacation, but it would be something else almost an adventure. Whereas someone who are used to a trailer can have the same feelings for that as I have for cottage life. Then there is the question of the political aspects when it comes to ownership. For example coming from Åland, you are not allowed to own property or land if you haven't lived on Åland for 5 years. This can create difficulties for outsiders who want to have a summer cottage on the Islands. Then timeshare might be one solution. But as our summer cottages runs in the family

and my father inherited it from his father, this have never been a problem for me and my family. And therefore I haven't really thought that much about it.

6. A sauna, a decent bed, some way of cooking food (gas stove but preferably electricity) and a way to store food. Ad a book, a blanket and a spot in the sun and I am all set.
7. You should do stuff you like. I prefer doing things I can't do at home, since there it's another set of "must-do" when relaxing in the cottage. Off course you have to eat, but the meal becomes a bigger activity that you share with your family and friends instead of something you have to do. You also have an excuse to not answering emails and staying constantly in contact with others. "Oh, I was out on my island in our summer cottage this weekend" and then your friends know you are in some sense out of reach, compared if you would have been at home. I like that feeling, not all the time but as a break now and then. So activities I do is sleeping, eating, reading, fishing, sauna, swimming and as it is vacation drinking is also a part of it. And archery since my mom started with it.
8. Things you do at home; like check your email, watch tv. Even watching different movies or shows on the computer would be a bit weird. But other people would probably feel different.
9. Not that important for me, the surroundings are more important especially the sea.
10. Yes and no. Many of my Åland friends have summer cottages because it's a common thing where I grew up, then it's not exclusive. But my other friends, from e.g. Sweden don't as they grew up in a city or a community where this is not as usual. So for them it is more exclusive, whereas I might take it a bit for granted. Becoming older and sharing experiences with others I come to realise I am a bit spoiled. Taking the boat out to our island, having fresh fish and smoking it for dinner is an everyday thing for me. But I know other people pay a lot of money for the same fish.
11. At this stage of my life, no. Right now I would like to travel the world and experience other cultures. But probably later in life when I have a family and children, then I would prioritise the safety and you-know-what-you-get-feeling that the a summer cottage gives you.

12. Yes, because they are an important part of the cottage experience for me. I don't want the modern things like the tv or an computer, I want the nature and the sea. Even though I can have the nature where I usually live its sill an important aspect for my cottages because many of the activities I do is connected to nature.
13. The meaning? Wow! Big words. For me it's something very important, but I still take it a little bit for granted. I am so used to have it, that I can't imagine a world without it. It's a place to get escape from everyday life. Right now, it's mostly my parents place, they rebuild and take care of all the houses (my grand grand dad grew up there, so there are a lot off old houses to fix). So I don't care that much more than I know it's a place I can go to and where I am always welcome. But later in life when my parents passes the place on to me, I will probably care more as it is by then my responsibility. I want to be able to leave it for my kids one day.

Teenager

1. I associate summer cottages with vacation, silence and relaxation.
2. Yes I do, since Finland is such a sparsely inhabited country, we have been close to the nature for a long time. Therefore we continue this tradition by having second homes.
3. Every other weekend.
4. Yes, it's nice because you can have time for yourself and nobody can disturb you.
5. No, it would remove the solitary aspect from the vacation.
6. It should have a well with clear water, a gas stove and nice sauna. It shouldn't have electricity.
7. Reading, socialize whit your closest, sauna, swimming and fishing. No it's not necessary since there is always maintenance that ought to be done.
8. Doing work especially if it's done with a computer, using a computer or mobile phone to surf the web.
9. Not too far since it's always nice to be close to help such as medical care, police etcetera, on the other hand if you are too close to the city the experience is lost.
10. No.

11. I would not prioritise cottage living, since I'm so used to cottage living, and if you for example go abroad you discover new things.
12. Yes, I don't see it as true cottage living if there is no nature
13. I see it as an opportunity to get away. It will be more important in the future since cities are growing larger and larger.

Young adult

1. Summer, sun, lake, rowing a boat, bathing in the sauna, picking berries, Muurinpohja- pancakes and a man playing accordion across the lake. An easy and cheap way to get far from the usual surroundings and the stress of everyday life.
2. Yes, definitely. It is such a widespread phenomenon. Difficult to give it reasoning.
3. Whenever in the summer, but due work we go there a few times during the season. I visit my sister's summer cottage more or less five times a year.
4. Yes, of course. There is something so pure and serene in the thought of a summer cottage. Green grass, blue water in the lake, soft summer wind... Makes me wish it was already a summer when I think about it!
5. Oh no. I think people of today spend too much time in the cars and traffic as it is, why would such ways to spend leisure time increase? At least I myself have no desires towards that. Maybe a small boat with a modest cabin would be nice, but only in addition to the cottage. Cottage comes first.
6. Electricity would be good, but not necessary. I have spent my childhood in a true summer cottage with no electricity, water had to be carried from the lake and drinking water from the well, there was no indoor toilet but an outhouse... that to me is attractive and represents what summer cottages have been in the old days and what they still should be. But if I'm totally honest, probably I would prefer to have electricity. No television thank you, no dishwashers and such. Sauna must be a wood heated one.
7. Bathing in the sauna, swimming, wandering in the forest with my dog, making Muurinpohja – pancakes and reading books. When I was little, I hated it when my

mum forced me to go pick berries with her on a hot summer day, but now I do it voluntarily, even without her. I love it and to me it is an essential part of summer.

8. I hate it when people take their laptops to summer cottage. Fortunately only few of my acquaintances do, but overall I consider it very unsuitable. Watching television is not suitable either, one can do that at home. I don't feel comfortable with heavy partying and drinking at summer cottage. Cottage is somehow a holy place. I don't see speed boats as unsuitable, but I wouldn't want to have my cottage by a lake shore where there is lots of that kind of traffic.
9. There's different sides to this. On one hand if the cottage would be relatively near, say maximum of one hour away from the city home, one could use it more and go there even for short periods of time. On the other hand, if it's a little further, one could really have the vacation-mode on.
10. Well, maybe economically. Otherwise I don't see why it would be.
11. If I had to choose between having a summer cottage for my whole life and never travel abroad, or travel abroad and never get my own summer cottage, I'd say I would choose in favour of the cottage. It is so important to me. But why would I have to make such a decision? As I said, maybe there would be economical limitations but otherwise why would it have to be either or? At the moment, I am dreaming of a summer cottage of my own. I desperately want it in the near future and will do everything it takes to get one soon!
12. Very important. Can one call it a summer cottage if there is no nature? There must be lots of green space, i.e. forests and somewhere in between small quiet non-asphalt roads. Lake or a sea is essential, to me lake is more natural than a sea because I'm a Finn from the inland. But anyway, the water should be clean.
13. Difficult to put it in words. The thought of maybe having my own summer cottage in the future is very appealing and would be a dream come true. But if I would concentrate on thinking about the summer cottage, where I have spent my childhood summers... its importance is far beyond words. I have so many memories from there. I think the place has shaped me towards the person I am today. If I ever have children, I would like them to have all those amazing summers at the cottage too. My childhood cottage was originally my grandmother's, whom I never had chance to meet as she passed away before I was born. In a way, the

cottage and the surroundings have brought her to me. Now that I think of it, why do I even want a summer cottage of my own with no history, when I'm so attached to the place of my childhood cottage? That is interesting... Maybe it's the loneliness that I want, because at the family summer cottage there's always my parents and my aunt with her husband too. Maybe I've become too independent to spend long periods of time under the same roof with my parents. But to put it in short, at the moment the meaning of the summer cottage is huge, has been even more so in the past and will most probably continue to grow.

Working adult

1. Sauna, beer, lake, barbeque.
2. Yes. Isn't it obvious?
3. I can visit friends' and relatives' second homes whenever. In practice, maybe 5-10 times per summer.
4. Well yes, it brings something back from the old days, there's something romantic about it. It's how one gets away from the everyday life.
5. I don't see that happening, but it is true that they are popular, especially RVs. But to replace the summer cottage, no.
6. I would like the cottage to be winter proof with electricity. Outhouse is enough, although I know the ladies of my family would like an indoor toilet! No need for fancy things such as dishwashers.
7. Things that happen outdoors, certain games for example. And of course swimming in the summer, fishing with my teenage son and chopping wood for the sauna. There's no need to have things happening all the time, one should consider relaxation and rest as the main activity. I should add, that because we are always visitors at a cottage, I feel a little pressured to do some chores, to say thank you to the hosts.
8. Watching television, listening to loud music and surfing on the internet.

9. I don't know, to me it plays no role. Of course one can't have the cottage at the backyard of a shopping centre. As long as there is a lake, forests and enough peace, the distance doesn't matter.
10. I'm not sure what this means. That if one has a cottage he/she couldn't travel elsewhere? Why would that be? Well of course purchasing and owning a summer cottage has economical pressure, so maybe there would be less money to spend on other travels. So in that way, perhaps it does affect one's other travels.
11. Yes, I'm not that excited about travelling abroad.
12. Yes, very important. Nature, including all the green and the lake, is what makes the summer cottage so attractive.
13. I'm glad me and my family are able to visit different summer cottages. I think it's important that my children know the cottage culture. Maybe it strengthens their Finnish identities, who knows! But I have never felt like I would necessarily have to have my own cottage. If we didn't have relatives and friends with cottages, maybe then we would've wanted a place of our own. I don't see this changing to one way or the other.

Young adult

1. Sauna, lake, badminton, outhouse.
2. Well yes, it is so popular, feels like everyone goes to cottages in the summer.
3. I could go pretty often, my parents have a cottage but because they are always there I don't go there with them...sometimes when they're not, I go there with my girlfriend and friends.
4. Well yes. I guess it's the feeling of old traditions, and life is so much simpler there, clean air, lake etc.
5. I don't think they can. Maybe someone who likes them would answer differently; I personally am not interested in such at all, and therefore no.
6. My parents' cottage is very modern, it wasn't when I was a child but for some reason they have made it winter proof now, and there's all the comforts of the modern life. I myself would prefer it more simple, for example I got so used to

having only an outhouse when I was a kid, that it is very essential part of cottage life to me. And since there is still the outhouse, I use it even if there is also an indoor option.

7. To me, the cottage used to be a place for relaxation...reading books, bathing in the sauna and swimming. But now, if I go there with my friends it is more party-oriented...we cook together and of course there's beer involved. We play outdoor games if it's a good weather.
8. I wouldn't want to go to the cottage just to watch television, I can do that at home. Stressing too much about things and bringing city troubles with you are undesirable. My mum is a bit like that, she stresses about "everything that needs to be done at the cottage". And I get then stressed by her.
9. Doesn't really matter that much. As long as there's the nature, it can be close to or far from the city.
10. Maybe for economical issues, otherwise no.
11. No I wouldn't, I think it's important that people expand their knowledge of other cultures and how better to do that than travelling around the world
12. Of course. Seems a little silly question! Nature and summer cottage are inseparable.
13. I'm glad I've had the chance to spend childhood summers at a cottage and I'm glad my family still has the same place. Its importance has declined during my 20s, but I'm sure it will again increase when I'm older, and maybe have children of my own. When my parents pass the cottage on to me and my sister, I dare to say I would never sell it. It's too personal.

Young adult

1. Lake, sauna, sun, summer, blueberries.
2. It must be, it's how we've returned to nature, to our roots.
3. My husband and I are building our own cottage so for the obvious reason we go there a lot! In general, I've always had an access to several cottages, and they

were visited mainly in the summers. My childhood family didn't have one so I'm super excited to have my own now!

4. Definitely. It represents all that is still good and pure and innocent in life.
5. I have never really thought about it, I don't think so but who knows where this world is going, weirder things happen!
6. Our cottage will be modest but with indoor toilet, washing machine and dish washer for example. We wanted to have all those things that make life easier, but in a minimalist way. The cottage will be very down to earth. We won't have a Jacuzzi or anything. Sauna must be traditionally wood heated and separate from the main building.
7. At the moment the cottage means a lot of work! But once it's done, I think I will enjoy things that one can do outdoors, gardening and such. Reading books and just lying on the pier on a sunny day are always welcomed!
8. Things that are somehow dependent on electronics, e.g. watching tv, playing Nintendo etc. All in all, people should spend most of the time outdoors.
9. We wanted the cottage to be at least a one hour away from the city home, to be able to really get in the mood of holiday even if one goes there just for the weekend. If it's too close to the city, I wouldn't get the same "going on a holiday" feeling to it.
10. In the near future, for economical reasons, yes. Sometimes I think if I'm too young to have a cottage because the general attitude is that people should travel when they're young, and since we purchased the plot and started building I won't be able to. But I guess it's what you value in life. I would rather have a cottage for frequent use and for the rest of my life than occasional trips abroad.
11. Yes, like I said.
12. Definitely. It's all about the nature. Our plot is relatively far away from any neighbours and that's how we want it to stay.
13. The meaning grows day by day when you see the work of your hands and realise you're building your own cottage. It's a very personal experience. I think it will only grow in importance in the future, if we have kids and when we get old.