Bordering mobilities: the case of Russian trans-border second-home ownership in Finland

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Abstract
Trans-border second-home ownership is a growing mobility trend in different parts of the world. This paper employs both a mobilities and border perspective in considering trans-border second-home ownership through the example of Russian second-home mobility in Finland. The analysis highlights the importance of borders and bordering in contemporary trans-border mobilities—an importance that the new paradigm has yet to fully recognize and address. The argument in the paper is constructed through three empirical perspectives: Russian second-home owners, Finnish locals and second-home owners, and parliamentary discussions. The results show that the border and the bordering process are present in multiple ways in Russian trans-border second-home mobilities. The border is a regulator of mobility; it is an attraction; it is an invisible barrier in everyday life; and it is a means of differentiation between “us” and “them.”

Keywords: bordering, mobility, second home, Russians, Finland

Introduction
Mobility is an integral feature of contemporary societies, and travel is increasingly becoming a necessity in people’s social lives. The increasing scale and diversity of human movements, with growing forms of “discretionary” mobility (Cohen and Cohen 2015b) and a diversification of migration forms, raise the question of finding an appropriate conceptual framework to understand this social change (Clarke 2014). The new mobilities paradigm, presented to the scientific community by Mimi

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Sheller and John Urry, has become a new approach for the social sciences in studying peoples’ movements (Sheller and Urry 2006). The new paradigm has claimed to “extend and develop the ‘mobility turn’ within the social sciences” (Sheller and Urry 2006, 208).

Mobility, both as a phenomenon and a research subject, is not new to the social sciences. What is new is, among other things, expressed in the following list:

The scale of movement around the world, the diversity of mobility systems [. . .], interconnections of physical movement and communications, the development of mobility domains that by-pass national societies, the significance of movement to contemporary governmentality and an increased importance of multiple mobilities for people’s social and emotional lives (Urry 2007, 195; see also Sheller and Urry 2006).

In other words, the pace and scale of mobility have been changing under the influence of the developing mobility systems and various material and immaterial objects. This has resulted in the growth of “forced” and “pleasure-seeking” mobilities (Urry 2007, 195).

One of the rapidly growing forms of “discretionary” (Cohen and Cohen 2015b) or “pleasure-seeking” (Urry 2007) mobility in different parts of the world is international property purchases for recreational purposes. While some owners move to their foreign properties for longer periods, others visit occasionally on holidays and weekends, forming an international circulation between first and second homes. The latter type of trans-border mobility is the focus in this article. In this study, I examine trans-border tourism mobility across the Finnish-Russian border through the example of Russian second-home ownership in Finland.

Tourism usually involves the crossing of borders, whether these borders separate different countries or different jurisdictions within one country. Borders affect various aspects of mobility across them, ranging from motivations to infrastructure development and marketing (Timothy 2001). I argue that the new paradigm, however, does not sufficiently addresses the role of borders in relation to contemporary mobilities. Borders are integral components of international mobility that should be better included in mobility discussions and in the new paradigm.

In this article I apply two theoretical perspectives to the research case of Russian second-home mobility in Finland: the mobility paradigm and the border(ing) concept. Starting from defining and applying the new paradigm to explain and conceptualize trans-border second-home mobility better, I continue with an issue that is less developed by this new paradigm: the contemporary understanding of borders and their role in international mobility and formation of mobility flows. Thus, the aim of my article is to conceptualize trans-border second-home mobility through the new paradigm and the border(ing) concept.
Figure 1. The study area of Savonlinna in the region of South Savo, with the closest border-crossing points and the trans-border road network. Map created by Olga Hannonen and Maija Toivakka, published originally in Hannonen (2016). Data sources courtesy of the National Land Survey of Finland and Suomen ympäristökeskus (Finnish Environment Institute)/YKR.

To deepen the understanding of second-home mobility and to illustrate the importance of borders for contemporary mobility using as an example Russian trans-border second-home ownership, I employ different perspectives on borders and bordering: Russian second-home owners, local Finnish citizens and second-home owners, and Finnish parliamentary discussions. Respectively, the data consist of three parts. The first part reports on the interviews with Russian second-home owners (N=25) from the Savonlinna area (the municipalities of Savonlinna, Enonkoski, Rantasalmi, and Sulkava), in the region of South Savo, Finland (see figure 1). The interviews were collected, transcribed, and translated from Russian into English by the author. The second part consists of the survey with Finnish local inhabitants (N=186) and second-home owners (N=308) from the same area. The survey was coded and translated from Finnish into English by the author. The third part focuses on legislative and citizens’ initiatives (N=4) by members of Finnish Parliament and discussions (N=4) on these initiatives. The necessary translations for this paper have been made by the author. Utilizing the interview and the survey data collected during my doctoral research in 2010, this article extends the scope of my doctoral study with a different theoretical perspective and additional data.

My article makes a primarily theoretical contribution. It connects border studies and the new paradigm through the empirical case of Russian second-home mobility in Finland and is structured as follows:
The second section presents the research case of Russian second-home mobility in Finland. The third section outlines the features of contemporary mobilities, as presented by the new paradigm, which help to enhance the understanding of second-home mobilities. In the fourth section, I discuss contemporary theoretical perspectives on borders and bordering. The fifth section presents an empirical discussion of the components of the new paradigm and borders in relation to Russian second-home mobility. The concluding discussion summarizes the findings.

**Across the Border: Russian Second-Home Mobility in Finland**

This case study of Russian trans-border second-home mobility comes from the border region of Finland in the southeast (see figure 1). The Finnish-Russian border was formed after Finnish independence from Russia in 1917, and “has been shaped as a consequence of wars, several territorial shifts and decades of closure” (Scott 2013, 79). The border shares an uneasy historical past between the two states. During the Winter War (1939–40) and the Continuation War during World War II (1941–44), the Soviet Union and Finland were enemies. In 1944 the Soviet Union annexed 12.5 percent of the Finnish territory, which resulted in the evacuation and relocation of more than 420,000 Finns and created a national trauma (Eskelinen and Jukarainen 2000; Paasi 1999). Thus, Finnish national identity has been constructed through portraying the Soviet Union as the “other” (Paasi 1999). The border with the Soviet Union was strictly controlled and functioned as “the East-West dividing line in Europe, with its most extreme form developing during the Soviet era” (Eskelinen and Jukarainen 2000, 255). Consequently, in addition to physical demarcation, the border has had a strong symbolic role. Nowadays, the Finnish-Russian border is an external border of the European Union (EU) and in many ways has remained both mentally and physically a hard, separating border (Kolossov and Scott 2013, 195).

The Finnish-Russian border became a point of contact after the Soviet Union’s collapse in 1991. With the opening of borders in 1991, Russian citizens discovered another world. Even though Finnish “vodka” tourism to Russia was already taking place in the 1970s and 1980s and Russians made singular journeys to Finland, after 1991, crossing the border became more accessible. Since then, Russian visits to Finland have rapidly increased, reaching 3.46 million visits in 2015 (Federal State Statistics Service 2016).

The high level of cross-border activity initiated discussions on the creation of a visa-free regime between Finland and Russia that reached the highest negotiation levels in 2012. The situation, however, went in the opposite direction. The redrawing of Ukraine’s borders after Crimea’s annexation into Russia in 2014 and the subsequent war in Eastern Ukraine resulted in heightened tensions in EU-Russian relations and the introduction of sanctions. These tensions are especially felt along the EU’s external border in the northeast—that is, along the Finnish-Russian
The border marks the visa regime between Finland and Russia. Because entering Finland also means crossing the external border of the EU, Russians must apply for an EU Schengen visa (Council Regulation [EC] 539/2001). Under the current visa regime, Russian property owners can stay in Finland for a maximum of 180 days per year without the right to social services (other tourists even less). Visa applications are submitted to a Finnish consulate or a Finnish visa center in large population centers in Russia. The visa application is either submitted personally or sent through a tourism agency that provides such services and may be located closer to a visitor’s place of residence. Recent changes in the visa application process require applicants to submit their biometric material in person at a Finnish consulate or visa center every fifty-nine months (Biometric Data Collection 2015). It is important to note that border communities along the Finnish-Russian border receive no benefit from their proximity to the border in terms of easier access to the neighboring state. Most of the population residing next to the border has never visited Finland and has a very vague picture about the closest neighbor (Hannonen 2016).

The Finnish-Russian border also encompasses great discrepancies between physical proximity, on the one hand, and economic, cultural, and linguistic distances between Russia and Finland on the other. The border marks one of the world’s highest economic gaps between neighboring countries (Numbeo 2016; The World Bank 2015). Despite that, Russians have been the largest group of foreign visitors in Finland. Since 2000, they have also become the largest group of foreign second-home owners in Finland. Russians purchased 4,424 properties in Finland between 2000 and 2015, which is nearly twice the amount of all other foreign purchases (N=2,441) for the same period.

In her study of Russians’ motives for second-home ownership in Finland, Lipkina (2013) found that a decision to purchase a second home abroad is driven by the differences in leisure conditions between Finland and Russia. Among the main motives for Russian second-home purchases in Finland are safety, nature, cultural motives, and prices. In terms of safety as a motive, Russians look for a calm and safe environment where they can spend their leisure time with family. Finland has the image of a safe destination both in terms of personal safety and safety of investment. A second home in Finland provides the possibility of owning a second home in pristine nature with personal lakeshore access. While shorelines in Russia are public property, in Finland, one can have them in private possession (Lipkina 2013). The image of Finland as a county of lakes attracts Russians. The study of the distribution of Russian properties shows that the majority of Russian property purchases in Eastern Finland have a lakeside location (see Hannonen, Lehtonen, and Toivakka 2016). The mentioned benefits of second-home ownership in Finland come with a cheaper price, which is another important motive for the purchase of property (Lipkina 2013).
Russian ownership in Finland has been the subject of a contested social debate, in which estimations of and attitudes toward the phenomenon have been largely negative. Speculation concerning the topic has been the subject of lively coverage in the national press and has been colored by increasingly nationalistic rhetoric (Pitkänen 2011). The debates in the press focus on three major issues. First, Russian property purchases are portrayed as a “Russian invasion”; these portrayals express the fear that Russians will buy out all the shores and land and resettle in Finland. Second, Russian purchases are perceived as a threat to the national landscape as they might turn lake shores into Russian dacha (second-home) villages. Third, Russians are accused of displacing locals by pricing Finns out of the market and purchasing permanent residences in rural areas (Pitkänen 2011). Since the outbreak of the Ukrainian conflict, Russian second homes are increasingly viewed as a security issue with the most recent public discussions concerning Russian property purchases next to strategic sites in Finland.

To understand the phenomenon better, the new mobilities paradigm and border(ing) concepts are used as a theoretical approach to trans-border second-home mobility. The next section discusses these approaches in more detail.

**Mobility: What is New?**

The new paradigm outlines changes in contemporary mobilities. It suggests thirteen features that define these changes (Urry 2007). This section presents only some of the elements that are relevant to second-home mobility. In order to discuss the features of the new paradigm in relation to second-home mobility, it is important to define the use of the term **mobility** in this paper.

Despite the current scale of mobility development, its meaning remains unspecified (Cresswell 2006). Migration studies define mobility as an “act of moving between locations” that is induced by push and pull factors (Cresswell 2006, 2). In geography, mobility is treated as “the movement from A to B” (Sheller 2014, 46). The term has had a sedentarist connotation and has become too narrow to outline the variety of movements, including temporary mobility, circulation, and movements across borders. The growing forms of mobility challenge a clear distinction between migration and tourism or some other types of visitations. Second-home mobility, including its trans-border forms, stands between tourism and migration and shares features of the two (Williams and Hall 2000). Similar to migration, second-home owners make a permanent connection to their second homes and second-home area through property ownership. It is, however, incorrect to categorize second-home owners as migrants, because they are not permanent residents, but permanent “repetitive” visitors to the area (Müller 1999; Overvåg 2011). The purpose of visits to a second home is recreation, which is a tourism activity. A second home is defined as a property owned as the occasional residence...
of a household that usually lives elsewhere, and which is primarily used for recreational purposes (Coppock 1977; Shucksmith 1983).

Williams and Hall (2002) state that migration literature fails to acknowledge the importance of temporary mobility and circulation. At the same time, a mobility approach to people’s movement “helps to deal with increasingly blurred boundaries between tourism and other categories of local, national, and global corporeal movements” (Cohen and Cohen 2015a, 14). This underlines the relevance of applying the mobility approach to second-home mobility, which stands between tourism and migration.

In the new paradigm, mobility ranges from physical movement to movement enhanced by technologies to movement of images and information and even to virtual travel (Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007). In this paper, mobility in the form of second-home ownership is defined as primarily the corporeal movement of people across national borders for leisure and recreational purposes.

While second-home mobility concerns physical relocation between first and second homes, the mobility paradigm suggests diverse connections and interconnections of different types of mobility. Urry (2007) criticizes the focus of the social sciences on face-to-face interactions, which assumes physical proximity and fails to consider other forms of social grouping not based on propinquity. Thus, in addition to corporeal travel, Urry (2007) defines four other types of mobility: physical movement of objects, imaginative, virtual, and communicative travel (original italics). The new paradigm “emphasizes the complex assemblage between these different mobilities that may make and contingently maintain social connections across varied and multiple distances” (Urry 2007, 48).

Social relations are never static but are constituted through “circulating entities” that can connect at a distance (Urry 2007, 46). There are “multiple forms of ‘imagined presence’ occurring” and “[s]ocial life involves continual processes of shifting between being present with others [. . .] and being distant from others” (47). Such connection “at a distance” or “imagined presence” (46–47) is enabled by objects, images, people, and information. This specifically applies to second-home mobility as the owners remotely connect to their second-home area through material means as well as connections at a distance (see the analysis section for more details). Mobility takes a number of forms, but as much as mobility is about movement, in the same way it concerns stillness, slowness, or immobility (Sheller 2014, 50). Various forms of dwelling, including second-home ownership, are about getting still and pausing the movement of hectic life. Second-home mobility is a movement between (at least) two distinct nodes of home and second home with a pause and rest in the latter location (Overvåg 2011).

Urry argues that discretionary mobility or unforced movement is power: “to be able to move (or to be able voluntarily to stay still) is for individuals and groups a major source of advantage” (Urry 2007, 51–52).
This is another feature of the new paradigm. I would add that mobility is the new power and capital in the contemporary world. Mobile populations are more empowered than immobile ones. In this regard, access to mobility is a valuable resource in the modern world.

Urry (2007) avers that, in addition to the self-evident economic and physical aspects of access to mobility, organizational and temporal aspects also need to be met. Organizational access assumes the ability to organize access to public or private transportation and to ensure safe travel. In international mobility, it may refer to the obtaining of the necessary documents, tickets, and travel permits. Access to mobility also depends on temporal availability. The various schedules and opening hours of, for example, visa centers or border-crossing points are important in providing access to trans-border mobility. Requirements and restrictive regulations concerning the crossing of national borders create difficulties in gaining access to mobility. International mobility thus remains a limited resource for many.

Cresswell (2010, 24) states that “[m]obility is channeled. It moves along routes and conduits often provided by conduits in space.” This channeling effect of routes designates the “possibilities for mobility and accessibility” (Vanninni 2011, 260). On the other hand, such factors as amenities and climate, political regimes, and costs also influence the formation of flows along certain routes over others. In trans-border second-home mobility, the opening of routes in both the physical (the opening of border-crossing points) and legal sense (visa regime, the right to property ownership) has created a new type of mobility and circulation pattern. Thus, borders play an integral role in the formation of flows and routes in trans-border movements. In this regard, my case study shows that circulation along certain routeways is not restricted to the territory of a particular state, and that it is the trans-national scale which is new in circulation.

The concept of “affordance” is another important feature of the paradigm. Affordance means objective and subjective elements that are both part of the environment and the organism (Urry 2007). In other words, affordance is both physical characteristics of the environment and bodily capacities. Among the examples of such affordance are “a path that draws people to walk along it, a beach that invites one’s skin to be tanned” (Urry 2007, 51). In such a manner affordances are also particular features of the environment that cannot be easily accessed in everyday life, the differences that make certain destinations particularly attractive. Hence, the border marks those differences.

One of the central points of the new paradigm is the role of mobile infrastructures and material objects (Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007). Urry (2007, 45) argues that material worlds, such as clothing, tools, objects, buildings, and paths (to which I add borders in relation to trans-border and international mobility in general), augment the “powers of humans.” These material worlds or systems precede and change human
powers and activities. Material objects provide different affordances and enable or presuppose movement (Sheller and Urry 2006). Immobile infrastructures organize, channel, and limit movements. Thus, they equally engage in the production of both mobilities and immobilities. The latter is especially the case with borders. However, borders remain a yet undefined subject in the new paradigm.

Borders safeguard the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state, which finds mobile populations challenging (Urry 2007). The border control relates directly to the feature of the paradigm that concerns the surveillance and control of mobile populations: “borders, gatekeepers, police and security guards filter out ‘legitimate’ tourists, with their tourist visas” (Sheller and Urry 2004, 3). In addition to control over movements, borders are also involved in the production of mobility and immobility. On the other hand, borders produce various forms of interactions, relations, and activities across them which would not exist without the border (Newman 2006; Schack 2001; Van der Velde and Spierings 2010).

Thus, borders have a number of meanings and functions and are present in various ways in trans-border mobility. The further discussion in the paper is devoted to a deeper understanding of the meanings and functions of borders in producing and stopping mobilities across them, and the presence of borders in people’s daily life.

Borders and Bordering

The border is found at the center of the politics of mobility (Konrad 2015), and studies on mobility are inextricably entwined with research on borders and the ways that they shape and regulate movements of individuals (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013; Richardson 2013). While the mobility approach provides a new perspective on borders (Sheller 2014), the new paradigm does not sufficiently address borders as an important component of contemporary mobilities. The paradigm’s perspective on borders is narrowed down to the barrier-and-control function of borders (Sheller 2014; Urry 2007).

Scientific views on borders have been changing during the last decades because of the changes in ways borders function both as physical structures and in terms of the meanings attributed to them. De-bordering and re-bordering processes have modified previous views on borders as fixed structures. Contemporary border studies focus on bordering processes and practices: “what borders do, how they perform, and how they are performed” (Timothy, Saarinen, and Viken 2016). When crossing borders, individuals cross several layers of a particular border—political, economic, and cultural (Schack 2000). Thus, in addition to the border, per se, and border formalities, an important aspect in understanding borders is the process of bordering, the way the border is perceived and maintained (Newman 2006; Schack 2000). My understanding of the border here is not solely downgraded to a line but incorporates its social and spatial
functions, as well as the way it defines the nature of inclusiveness and exclusiveness (Newman 2006).

Borders as physical constructions have various degrees of access by different populations. In terms of accessibility, borders can be categorized as a continuum from functionally closed, or strong, borders with almost no trans-border interaction to integrated, soft borders with high stability and almost unrestricted movement of people and goods (Gelbman and Timothy 2011). The Finnish-Russian border is located on the strong side of the continuum of border functionality with strict border and visa control on both sides of the border. It has been argued that the level of interaction between people across the border depends on the type of border; the interaction is high across soft borders and low when the border is strong (Schack 2001). Statistics on Russian outbound travel both supports and contradicts this argument. While Turkey, a visa-free destination (i.e., open border), was the most popular destination for Russian visits in 2015 with 3.6 million visits, Finland, which has a visa regime with Russia, was the second most popular destination with 3.46 million visits (Federal State Statistics Service 2016).

The presence of the border and the differences that it marks may become a resource for intensive cross-border activities, which is especially the case in trans-border tourism. In tourism, borders as political boundaries act as barriers, attractions, and modified tourism landscapes. Both physical lines and the differences across them attract visitors (Timothy 2001). Thus, the main focus of this article is on the way borders influence mobility across them, their role as barriers and attractions.

Gelbman and Timothy (2011, 112) define the importance of borders in tourism and their attractiveness for visitors in the following way: “The populations on the two sides of a border are usually different, as they belong to different regimes and have developed different lifestyles and cultures, separate economies and different cultural landscapes.” In such a way, the border and places across the border become an attraction. While differences are considered as the major force and attraction for trans-border tourism, including second-home ownership, the disparities across borders should be attractive but not too unfamiliar. Thus, in order to stimulate mobility across borders, the balance between unfamiliar (but not too strange) and somewhat familiar (but not too much) should be achieved (Van der Velde and Spierings 2010). In second-home mobility, people cross borders for cheaper properties, fewer restrictions in planning, warmer climates, and better investments (Müller 2011; Paris 2006). In addition to economic factors, the border can also provide access to a society and environment that are perceived as more picturesque or harmonious for second-home location (Buller and Hoggart 1994; Hannonen 2016). In such a manner, the border may be(come) an opportunity.

Borders as barriers in tourism can be either real or perceived, or, correspondingly, physical and mental (Schack 2000; Timothy 2001; Van der Velde and Spierings 2010). As a real barrier, the border imposes
requirements on travel documents to cross the border, limitations to the
length of stay, restrictions on types and amounts of goods, and strict rules
for customs and taxation. In relation to second-home tourism, there are
often restrictions regarding property purchases and ownership by foreign-
ers and limitations on the length of stay in the destination country (Paris
2006).

Borders as perceived or mental barriers refer to how the border is
perceived and imagined by potential tourists on both sides of the border. It is
argued that the removal of the physical border does not eliminate
other borders and differences, as borders “carry a heavy weight of sym-
bolism” (O’Dowd 2002, 27), and differentiate “us” from “them.” Thus,
in addition to the physical boundaries themselves, the bordering process,
the way borders are constructed and imagined, and the way people per-
ceive and act on them are also highly important (Timothy 2001; Newman
2006). Even when physical demarcation is removed and the political
agenda changes, borders “persist in peoples’ minds” (Schack 2000,
203). Strong mental and physical attachment to one’s home across the
border mentally upholds the borderland (Gielis and van Houtum 2012).
Bordering means “distinguishing between those who belong and those
who do not” (Newman 2006, 147), differentiating between “us” and
“them,” “insiders” and “outsiders.” While the physical border represents
the top-down separation of the “self” from the “other” initiated by gov-
ernment, the perception of differences, individual border narratives, and
experiences represent the bottom-up or the bordering process. Newman
(2006, 144) states that “the bordering process, rather than the border per
se, [...] affects our lives on a daily basis.” Thus, in order to understand
the notions of “difference” and “other,” the meaning of the border to
people, it is important to “listen to their personal and group narratives”
(Newman 2006, 154). Thus, the understanding of the border in this arti-
cle is constructed in part through the perspective of Russian owners and
Finnish locals.

In relation to crossing borders, it is significant, for instance, how
people perceive the border formalities and restrictions, administrative dif-
fferences, costs, and ideological paradigms (Van Houtum 2010). Different
languages and cultures on different sides of the border create an addi-
boundary that “remains difficult to cross.” In second-home tourism,
owners make a permanent connection to a foreign destination through
a second home. In such a way, they constantly negotiate the differences
and define the borders of familiar and unfamiliar. The way the border(ing)
is present in Russian trans-border mobility in Finland is discussed in the
results section.

Results: The New Paradigm and Trans-Border Second-Home Mobility
This section discusses the features of the new paradigm in relation
to Russian second-home mobility. The theoretical discussion here
emphasizes that an approach to mobility as just a physical movement between a first and second home does not reflect the multiplicity of such mobility. Urry (2007) suggests that mobility is composed of diverse connections, including those at a distance. When Urry’s types of mobility are applied to second-home mobility, they demonstrate that in addition to physical or corporeal travel between a first and second home, the mobility of various kinds of objects (personal goods, souvenirs, and gifts that second-home owners bring along) is also included. Second-home ownership also presumes imaginative travel to a second home through photographs, videos, and other images. In some cases, owners travel virtually to their second homes through smart surveillance or house-maintenance systems. This type of mobility is, however, rather limited in case of Russian second-home ownership in Finland, and it largely depends on the equipment of the second home.

Communicative travel happens through person-to-person messages via various communication devices. This type of travel is largely interrelated with connection “at a distance” (Urry 2007, 46). Communicative travel is not exclusively related to a second home, but rather to the second-home area, its inhabitants, other owners, and local institutions and companies (Overvåg 2011). Various legal, economic, social, political, familial, work, and other obligations require physical or face-to-face presence and extensive movement that cannot always be replaced with communicative travel. Such obligations often create the compulsion to travel (Urry 2007). Moreover, in the case of Russian second-home ownership in Finland, it is not always possible to remotely conduct various forms of payment and seasonal arrangements at a second home across the border. Communicative travel is, however, increasingly important in long-distance ownership, especially in the case of trans-border second-home ownership. The empirical study of Russian second-home mobility shows that communicative travel is largely exercised by Russian second-home owners through connections to local “mediators.” Mediators are often local contractors or interpreters who have been involved in second-home construction or purchase. They mediate between the two cultures, providing various maintenance services for second homes and their surroundings:

We go to the same person who built the place [. . .]. Even when we’re on our way here, or even when we’re in Saint Petersburg, we can keep in touch by phone or email. It’s not an issue at all.
(Russian second-home owners, St. Petersburg)

Thus, mediators are involved in the communicative travel of Russian second-home owners to their second homes on the other side of the border.

Overvåg (2011) has examined different types of mobility in relation to second homes. Similarly to Urry’s categories, Overvåg (2011) defines physical or corporeal movement through “the temporary presence of second-home owners” in their second homes, and remote connection
through “‘permanent’ presence through material means and connections at a distance” to their second homes. In terms of the new mobilities paradigm, the “permanent presence through material means and connections at a distance” (159) is of greater interest here. This type of mobility describes how “second homes and their owners are permanently present in several ways in the rural landscape and communities, even when the owners themselves are not physically present” (158). This permanent presence of second-home owners in rural communities happens, first, through the permanent physical presence of second homes and their connected infrastructure in the landscape. Second, “second-home owners continually engage economically and politically in taking care of their second homes and promoting their interests, also when they are not physically present” (160). This is what Urry defines as a shift between being present with others and being distant but simultaneously co-present (an “imagined presence”) through different means of communication (Urry 2007, 47). While Urry (2007, 47) emphasizes the intermittent nature of presence which is dependent on processes of connection and communication, Overvåg (2011) demonstrates that connection at a distance is a permanent presence in the case of second-home ownership.

Second-home mobility is an example of various forms of connections and communication that do not necessarily involve face-to-face interactions. In addition to face-to-face interactions and connection at a distance, travel to a second home is predominantly “facing the place” (Overvåg 2011) rather than faces: “this is the place where you can be alone, at peace [. . .] this place is a nook” (Russian second-home owner, Moscow).

The border on the way to a second home in Finland creates additional face-to-face interactions. I consider such a “concomitant” face-to-face interaction a distinct feature of cross-border mobility2 (in relation to airports, Urry [2007, 54] uses the term “unintended co-presence”).

Russian trans-border second-home mobility combines a number of movements. Physical relocation between a first and second home incorporates a number of other mobilities, such as communicative, imaginative, and virtual travel that are present and exercised in different degrees by the owners, as well as permanent presence in the second-home area and concomitant interaction at the border. The way the border influences the mobility of Russian owners is discussed in the following section.

Bordering Russian Second-Home Mobilities

The discussion in this section is devoted to top-down and bottom-up perceptions and construction of border and bordering process in Russian trans-border second-home mobility from three perspectives: (1) Russian owners’ perception of the physical border and its role in movement between a first and second home, as well as the negotiation of differences at their second homes in Finland; (2) bordering second-home mobilities,

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2 It should be noted that the discussion in this article is about controlled borders that require customs and migration control, such as the Finnish-Russian border.
and defining “us” and “them” from the perspective of the Finnish local population and Finnish second-home owners in the study region; and (3) reinforcement of borders of mobility at the national level in Legislative Initiatives and parliamentary discussions.

The border is an essential component of Russian second-home ownership in Finland (Hannonen, Tuulentie, and Pitkänen 2015). It is frequently crossed on the way to and from a second home; it marks the different regulations and norms that exist on either side. The border also imposes restrictions that shape mobility across it: “Finn restrict our length of stay” (Russian second-home owners, Moscow); “The only problem is the visa, it is given for half a year” (Russian second-home owner, St. Petersburg). Thus, some of the owners find it challenging to adapt their second-home visits with the visa regime.

The interview data with Russian second-home owners demonstrate that the border acts as an attraction in trans-border second-home mobility because of attractive differences on the other side: “You cross the border and you are pleased right away” (Russian second-home owner, St. Petersburg). Safety is the most important difference on the other side of the border. From an investment perspective, “Finland today, and hope still for a long time, is famous for the fact that real estate is real (immovable)” (Russian second-home owner, St. Petersburg). Physical safety is another important difference in Finland: “[A second home was purchased] because of safety. Again, to have something like this in Russia you have to build the fence, all security systems, you cannot leave it for a while unattended” (Russian second-home owner, St. Petersburg). The quotes show both the emphasis on a favorable and attractive environment in Finland and the differences in societal conditions between Finland and Russia. Thus, second-home ownership in Finland is also an escape from the insecure lifestyle and leisure conditions in Russia.

In second-home mobility, people long for amenity-rich places. In Finland, Russians are attracted by the possibility of lakeshore ownership: “It is impossible to buy a plot with a shoreline” (Russian second-home owner, Moscow). The possibility of lakeshore ownership in the case of Russian second-home mobility in Finland is a good example of an environment which cannot be easily accessed in everyday life back in Russia. Thus, a lakeshore that attracts Russians to build a second home on it is without any doubt an issue of “affordance” suggested by the new paradigm (Urry 2007). Most of the respondents mentioned cheaper prices on second homes in Finland: “You are saying so nicely, ‘a second home in Russia.’ We cannot afford a second home in Russia” (Russian second-home owner, St. Petersburg) (please note that the interviews with the owners were conducted in 2010).

The border provides a number of positive and desirable differences for Russian second-home owners, but it also maintains a number of barriers. While the Finnish-Russian border marks a strict border regime and involves a number of border formalities, second-home owners perceive
invisible barriers, sociocultural and linguistic differences, as the most challenging: “The main problem is, naturally, the absence of [a shared] language” (Russian second-home owner, St. Petersburg); “Lack of language is an obstacle” (Russian second-home owners, St. Petersburg).

The language and cultural barriers of Russian second-home owners have led to the formation of “mediator practices” to meet their needs. This network of mediators in Finland is sustained by the sociocultural and linguistic distance between Russia and Finland (Hannonen 2016). Language is also a barrier for deeper community involvement and integration for Russian owners (Lipkina and Hall 2013). Russian owners, however, are determined to overcome the social and informational vacuum by learning the language and culture, and getting to know their neighbors. As a result, from the perspective of Russian owners, the border enhances and marks attractive differences between Finland and Russia, but also upholds the invisible barriers that are a part of everyday life at the second home.

The relationship with and attitudes toward Russian second-home ownership in Finland have been studied through a survey with local Finnish residents and second-home owners. The survey questions on Russian second-home ownership in the area concerned the presence of Russian owners in the neighborhood, mutual interactions and conflicts (if any), opinions on the restriction of Russian ownership, as well as respondents’ agreement with media statements about Russian second-home ownership in Finland. In other words, the overall attitudes and opinions on Russian second-home owners were evaluated.

The results revealed less-favorable attitudes held by Finns toward Russian ownership with the Finns’ desire to uphold both mental and physical distance between the two. While over a half of Finnish local residents (56 percent) and Finnish second-home owners (52 percent) from the Savonlinna region have Russian second-home owners in the same neighborhood or village, the majority of them have never been in contact with a Russian second-home owner (65 percent of locals and 77 percent of second-home owners). Moreover, more than half of the Finnish locals (51 percent) and Finnish second-home owners (61 percent) want to have very little or no contact with Russians. Russian second-home ownership in general is perceived negatively as 64 percent of both groups would like to restrict Russian opportunities to purchase properties in Finland. Frequently mentioned reasons for the restrictions included the shady background of Russian owners, the absence of a reciprocal right to land ownership in Russia, and the belief that Finns should have a primary right to Finnish land:

Go somewhere else for money laundering. (Finnish second-home owner, Savonlinna region)

If a Finn is not allowed to own property in Russia, why then is a Russian allowed to in Finland? (Finnish second-home owner, Savonlinna region)
Finland for Finns. (Finnish local resident, Savonlinna region)

Nationalistic connotations were supplemented with the references to the historical past and the image of Russia as an enemy:

The fatherland that our fathers have protected should not be sold to foreigners. (Finnish local resident, Savonlinna region)

Finns cannot purchase even former home shores on the Isthmus (that is, the annexed Finnish territories on the Karelian Isthmus). (Finnish second-home owner, Savonlinna region)

Attitudes toward Russian interest in Finnish properties were clearly differentiated from other foreigners: “EU citizens are welcomed” and “Properties should not be sold to foreigners outside the EU” (Finnish second-home owners, Savonlinna region). Many Finnish respondents who supported restrictions suggested property rentals over the ownership right for Russians.

The study shows that despite intense cross-border interactions and the permanent presence of Russian second-home owners in the Savonlinna region, Finns desire a reinforcement of the mental border through minimal contacts with Russian owners and a restriction on Russian property purchases in Finland. The latter is an attempt to move the mental barrier to the edge of the territory of the Finnish state and reunite it with the physical border.

The issue of Russian property purchases in Finland has been the subject of heated debates in Finnish Parliament. Attempts to restrict Russian property purchases in Finland have been made through three legislative initiatives and one citizens’ initiative (Legislative Initiative 35/2009; 45/2011; 77/2013; Kansalaisaloite 2015).

The legislative initiatives of 2009 and 2011 are identical but were submitted in different parliamentary seasons. They raised a number of concerns on foreign (i.e., outside the European Economic Area [EEA]) and especially Russian interest in Finnish properties that largely intersect with concerns in the press. Among them are an increase in property prices; violation of the purpose of property use; sale of areas of special value; potential for conflicts including those with racist connotations; and the location of foreign properties that might be questioned from the perspective of security policy. The proposed restrictions on property ownership were aimed at protecting national assets, improving the regulations of property acquisition by foreigners and their societal responsibilities, determining the reciprocity principle in foreign property ownership, as well as keeping

Footnote 3: The citizens’ initiative is one of the forms of legislation’s enactments through a direct proposal from citizens who are eligible to vote. The initiative must be signed by 50,000 citizens within six months to be passed to the parliament (for more details, see kansalaisaloite.fi).
the benefits of a foreign presence on the Finnish property market through property rentals (Legislative Initiative 35/2009; 45/2011).

In the following initiative in 2013, these claims were supplemented with concerns on turning permanent residences into vocational use, money laundering, a lack of background information on the buyers, and an absence of any reciprocity principle of land ownership by foreigners in Russia (Legislative Initiative 77/2013). The citizens’ initiative (2015) examines the above-mentioned claims in more detail with a special emphasis on foreign interest in lakeshore locations that are (according to the document) decreasing in Finland (Kansalaisaloite 2015). None of the four initiatives proposes a complete restriction on property purchases by non-EU and non-European Free Trade Organization (EFTA) citizens, but demand to subject them to special permissions. These legislative initiatives did not proceed further in the parliament, but their frequency demonstrates the negotiation of the border of second-home mobility in Finland in relation specifically to Russian owners.

Parliamentary discussions on each initiative give a wider perspective and a deeper understanding of “othering” Russian ownership and bordering second-home mobilities (PTK 48/2009; PTK 9/2012; PTK 10/2012; PTK 16/2014). While bordering practices are often constructed through differentiating “us” from “them” (Newman 2006), the parliamentary discussions focus mainly on “them,” Russians, without a strong definition of “us,” which is interchangeably used as both Finland and EFTA/EEA. The restriction of Russian second-home ownership in Finland is constructed around the absence of reciprocity rights for Finns to purchase properties in Russian border areas (with Russian territories bordering Finland in the southeast having a special meaning for Finns, as former Finnish territories). References to the historical past and annexed territories are also present in the parliamentary discussions. The reciprocity of property purchases as one of the main points emphasizes Finland’s deprived position and Russians’ advantage in trans-border second-home purchases:

An important issue is the absence of reciprocity. If foreigners can purchase land in Finland, Finns should be able to reciprocally purchase land in that country. In Russia it is not possible. (PTK 48/2009)

It is important to note that reciprocity issues with other countries that have restrictions on land purchases by foreigners, including Finns—for example within the EU—have not been raised in the discussions. This indicates the specific focus on Russians as the “other” on the Finnish property market: “according to various public opinion polls, the majority of Finnish citizens want to forbid especially Russians’ right to purchase properties in Finland” (PTK 16/2014).

The discussion portrays Russian interest in Finnish properties as a source of problems with the first legislative initiative in 2009 resembling
a call “to prepare for possible problems before they appear on a bigger scale” (PTK 48/2009). The discussions are, however, contradictory in their content. While the one side accuses Finns of having a racist perspective when suggesting nationality-based restrictions, the other side talks about discrimination against Finns (PTK 48/2009).

Russian property owners are portrayed as having “very often a dubious background” (PTK 16/2014), and Russian purchases in general are connected to the issue of money laundering, speculation, and grey economies: “Finland cannot become such a country where one can come and invest in property with criminal money” (PTK 10/2012). Since the outbreak of the Ukrainian conflict in 2014, the discussions have become more acute, and Russian property purchases have been addressed as a matter of security policy, the purchases posing a threat to Finnish national security because of the possibility that the Russian state might seek to protect its citizens across the border (PTK 16/2014; Vihavainen and Laitinen 2018).

Discussion

In this article, I discussed two theoretical perspectives on Russian trans-border second-home ownership in Finland. A mobilities approach to Russian second-home ownership through the features of the new paradigm underlines the complexity of second-home mobility, which is composed of a number of different mobilities. Such features of the paradigm as communicative travel and connection “at a distance,” borders as immobile structures, affordances and access to and formation of distinct routeways are especially important in Russian trans-border second-home mobility. “Connections at a distance” (Overvåg 2011) is a distinct type of second-home mobility. It extends Urry’s (2007) definition and encompasses both imaginative and permanent presence. Unlike Urry’s communicative travel, which concerns new technological advancements, Russian second-home owners connect at a distance through local mediators in Finland. In such a manner, mediators enable the communicative travel of Russian owners. Face-to-face mobilities in Russian second-home mobility in Finland include two face-to-face interactions: a “concomitant” interaction and surveillance at the border, and the interaction at and with a second home, which has been categorized as “facing the place” (Overvåg 2011).

As any mobility, Russian mobility depends greatly on the issue of access: economic, physical, organizational, and temporal availability, including access to transportation, and the opening hours of visa centers and border-crossing points. The border plays an important role in influencing mobilities across it. It provides “affordances” (Urry 2007) for Russian second-home mobility, such as the lakeshore and safety. Borders as immobile structures affect the way people move, the path and route taken. Thus, they impact the formation of some routeways over others. In the case of Russian second-home mobility, the opening of borders both in physical and legislative terms has enabled this mobility type.
demonstrates that borders are involved in production of mobility and are an essential part of contemporary mobilities.

In addition to the physical connections between the two states, the challenging organizational access to mobility that includes the visa-application process with personal submission of the application at the closest consulate, visa center, or tourism agency demonstrates the presence of the border in everyday life of potential travelers beyond the actual border-crossing point. Passing first through visa centers or consulates makes Russians’ route to Finland more complex.

The Finnish-Russian border is located on the strong side of the continuum of border functionality. This indicates that in addition to the vivid physical demarcation and strict border control, the border affects trans-border travelers in many other ways. While real barriers affect the way mobilities are produced, they also manifest those intangible differences which shape mobilities’ outcomes. The relationship between second-home tourism and borders differs from other types of trans-border tourism. While ordinary tourists pass through a destination, second-home owners make a permanent connection with the destination through second-home ownership. Thus, while second-home owners are permanent visitors to the same area, the border and its invisible barriers are present in everyday life and affect life beyond the border. Despite the strict border regime and border formalities, the invisible barriers (socio-cultural and linguistic differences) are perceived as the most challenging by Russian owners. This supports the theoretical standpoints on the multilayered structure of the border (Schack 2000). While for Russians it is possible to cross the physical border, it is yet impossible to cross other barriers. Invisible barriers influence second-home owners’ leisure practices in Finland leading to the formation of mediator-practices to fulfill their needs. In addition to the barrier function of the border, in the case of trans-border second-home ownership in Finland, the border also appears to be both an attraction and an opportunity for better leisure conditions, such as lakeshore ownership and safety. Thus, Russian second-home ownership in Finland is a distinct type of mobility, as it is a product of the border’s very existence. The opportunities the border provides and safeguards outweigh its control function.

There have been many attempts to re-enforce this symbolic border in relation to property ownership and exclude Russians as the “outsider” from the “insider,” the Finnish, and, more generally, European property market. The bordering process of Russian second-home owners as a negotiation between the familiar and the unfamiliar significantly differs from Finns’ differentiation of “us” and “them.” The study shows that Russians and Finns differently articulate language and culture as invisible and mental barriers. Russian owners are constantly negotiating the barriers to overcome them, but Finns use them to construct the “other.” While Finns are not directly involved in Russian second-home mobility, this type of mobility produces a number of barriers that generate the bordering
process at different levels at the destination. The study has revealed that the historical past that produced a strong dividing line between East and West greatly influences contemporary perceptions of Russian ownership by Finns. This results in bordering Russian second-home mobilities and “othering” Russians from the Finnish property market.

The application of the elements of the new paradigm to trans-border second-home ownership offers a useful theoretical framework for addressing contemporary mobilities and understanding their complexity. In addition to interpreting second-home mobilities through the lens of the paradigm, I have applied the border(ing) concept to the research case. In such a way, this empirical case study of Russian trans-border second-home ownership shows the significance of the border and bordering process in mobility. The results demonstrate the presence of borders in mobility in various forms. They are a part of mobility both for the group that crosses the border, but also for those at the destination who are not directly involved in this mobility.

Sheller and Urry have engaged in discussion of the interrelation of the border and mobility in a number of their publications (Sheller 2014; Sheller and Urry 2004, 2006; Urry 2007), but they have not yet included the border as one of the important elements of the new paradigm. Borders in many ways are the reason for immobility, but simultaneously they produce mobility to attractive and accessible destinations. The case of Russian second-home mobility in Finland shows that such ownership is the result of the presence of the border. The border marks the desirable differences and provides a number of opportunities. The impact of the border and contemporary bordering practices in producing (im)mobility is a subject of future research on the topic.

References


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