# Reframing rurality: the impact of Airbnb on second home communities in Wales and Sweden

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## Abstract

This chapter presents evidence from two established second home destinations (Snowdonia in the UK and the Dalarna region in Sweden), where the proliferation of properties listed on Airbnb is currently contributing to the reframing of the existing rural landscape. This study suggests that there is a separate but connected layer of spatial interaction inherent in these rural environments, which is mediated by the perceptions of rural space of the three user groups: primary residents, second homeowners, and Airbnb users. This chapter argues that the influence of P2P platforms within these mixed-use communities injects an additional level of spatial interaction and conceptualization of rurality. Based on the findings from this study, it is noted that Airbnb guests' perceptions of rurality are similar to those of other rural tourists, but this is also influenced by the local hosts and wider rural community. Understanding how these users perceive the rural space is essential to the development of resilient rural communities as consensus is critical for resilience planning.

## Keywords

Second homes; P2P; rurality; rural tourism; rural landscape; rural communities

## Highlights

- Airbnb reviews  are analysed through a qualitative netnography.

- Different dimensions of rurality between Airbnb guests and other local residents are discussed.

- The netnography clearly shows important aspects for Airbnb users such as proximity to amenities and attractions.

- Understanding these perspectives is essential to the development of resilient rural communities.

## Introduction

Rural areas have long been popular tourist destinations. Second homes, in particular, are often found in these locations, and, in Europe, this phenomenon is closely tied to the imagery of the rural in opposition to the urban, a common theme within rural studies (Bell, 2006; Cloke, 2006). In fact, rurality, according to Kamvasinou and Stringer (2019, p. 784), "is promoted through the marketing of second homes to an urban elite." While the second home tradition, particularly in Scandinavia, is often tied to traditional seasonal utilitarian population movements from the city to rural areas, recent second home acquisitions are frequently the result of shifting populations, particularly from rural to urban areas (Müller, 2007). However, although second homeowners and primary residents have often co-existed in these spaces for some time, the recent rise in sharing platforms like Airbnb have added another layer of social complexity to these rural spaces. Research on the rise of Airbnb and similar P2P platforms is gaining momentum, yet it predominantly focuses on urban or mature coastal destinations. To date, research on these platforms in rural areas is limited, and, in particular, the impact of sharing platform users on countryside second home communities remains unstudied. The need for research into sharing platforms and second homes has been noted in the literature (Marjavaara et al., 2019) as has the call for a better understanding of resilience and tourism in rural areas (Helgadóttir and Dashper, 2020). What emerges is the need for clarity and evidence with regards to resilience as a social construct resulting from the iteration of tourism-relevant stakeholders at the destination level (Amore et al., 2018). It is these noted gaps that our research seeks to fill. In particular, the emphasis on the rural allows for a more focused analysis without the spatial and population complexities inherent in urban environments. In order to provide more depth to the study, we selected two case studies where Airbnb is at different stages of development, one in Sweden and one in Wales.

## Theory

Traditionally, rurality, as a theoretical construct, has been, and continues to be in many areas of rural studies, associated with the dichotomy between physical urban and rural environments (Bell, 2006; Cloke, 2006; Holden and Lupton, 2017). However, as Cloke (2006, p. 19) notes, a firm distinction between these two spaces no longer exists, leading to their conceptualization of rurality as a social construct "characterized by a multiplicity of social spaces overlapping the same geographical area." This then allows for multi-layered understanding and interpretations of what constitutes an area's "rurality" as defined by the various rural space users (Woods, 2010), which Crouch (2006, p. 363) refers to as "a kaleidoscope of culturally mediated images." Rurality is often framed as an act of consumption as opposed to production (Jepson and Sharpley, 2015) although the heterogeneity of interpretation of this rural space by different users can cause conflict (DuPois, 2006). For example, rural tourists often search for a sanitized rural idyll that is embedded in a nostalgic interpretation of the rural past (Heldt Cassel and Pettersson, 2015; Panzer-Krause, 2020) or even simply conceived as a space devoid of human activity entirely (Bell, 2006; Holden and Lupton, 2017). This can often conflict with the lived rural realities of local residents. As a case in point, according to research by Heldt Cassel and Pettersson (2015), when local farmers in Sweden developed rural farm-based tourist experiences, it was necessary to present an idealized farm environment, which was both sterile and tranquil. This was meant to appeal to their visitors' sense of what constitutes an authentic rural environment, in contrast with the modern farms as sites of production.

However, it would be incorrect to separate groups so succinctly into locals and non-locals as both rurality and social groupings are exceedingly more complex. Even among permanent

residents, there can be contested perceptions of rural space. This is clearly visible in cases of significant in-migration, as was observed in Smith and Phillips' (2001) study of the gentrification process of a village in Yorkshire, UK. They identified two specific groups whose views on rurality, while both rooted in an idealized rural past, were divergent depending on where they had chosen to live in the area. Village dwellers were more focused on the rural idyllic village lifestyle, and the local community in particular, whereas those who chose to purchase housing on the moors were more concerned with solitude and pristine space. Both of these views of rurality appear similar to those observed among rural tourists, but, in the case of permanent residents, the emphasis on community resulted in the integration and assimilation of the village in-migrants, easing their inclusion into the local space. In contrast, the moor-based in-migrants, similarly to tourists and predominantly due to their rejection of local community and customs, found their understanding of local rurality at odds with more traditional rural culture (Smith and Phillips, 2001). Thus, within residential sub-groups, contrasting images of rurality may exist, but the levels of acceptance by different group members are dependent on community involvement.

The importance of community is a common theme in the discussion of rural spaces, and it is highly relevant, in the case of this chapter, for the discussion of second homes in these rural spaces. While the phrase "second home" has no agreed upon universal definition (Hall and Müller, 2004; McIntyre, 2006; Müller, 2014; Paris, 2009), it is often used as a blanket term to allow for a variety of contexts and usage (Back and Marjavaara, 2017; Hall and Müller, 2004). In rural areas, second homes are predominantly either purpose-built or purchased, although some are inherited family homesteads (Flemsæter, 2009; McIntyre et al., 2006; Williams and Van Patten, 2006). In both instances, second homeowners are spatially integrated with local permanent residents and may be reliant on similar amenities, such as grocery stores, hardware stores and cafés. (Larsson and Müller, 2019; Tuulentie and Kietäväinen, 2020). However, similarly to rural tourists and the in-migrants in the study by Smith and Phillips (2009), second homeowners' interpretation of the rurality of the space in which their properties are located is framed either as pristine wilderness (Vepsäläinen and Pitkänen, 2010) or through the nostalgic rural idyll, where, in contrast to tourists who are often shielded from the realities of rural life, there is an active avoidance of non-idyllic rural elements (Pitkänen, 2008). Nonetheless, rural second homeowners, much like many of their primary counterparts, place significant value on the local community and their situatedness in it (Nordin and Marjavaara, 2012; Vepsäläinen and Pitkänen, 2010), even when this community may only be composed of other second homeowners (Tuulentie and Kietäväinen, 2020). Thus, second homeowners who are more attached to the community, similarly to the majority of primary residents, will mediate their spatial understanding through their interpersonal relationships.

In this context, the rise of Airbnb and similar P2P accommodation platforms for temporary lettings in rural areas contributes to an additional layer of complexity in the social construct of rurality. Research on Airbnb in rural areas is at an early stage, with evidence from Italy and Spain showing a higher ratio of listings per capita in the idyllic countryside of Tuscany and Sierra Nevada (Adamiak et al., 2019; Cesarani and Nechita, 2017). However, the focus of most existing studies is on the distribution of listed properties in the countryside (e.g., Cors-Iglesias et al., 2020). Additionally, studies on the perception of Airbnb in rural areas are limited and fall short in providing a clear appraisal of Airbnb's role in host-guest relationships and community wellbeing (Gyimóthy and Meged, 2016; Suess et al., 2020). There is nevertheless research demonstrating how escapism, localness and authenticity are generally relevant when choosing between a listed property on Airbnb and other types of accommodation (Guttentag et al., 2018; Mody et al., 2017). These studies, however, do not

delve into the imagery of specific localities and tend to focus on the shortcomings of the hospitality sector from an experience economy perspective.

Given the growth of these P2P properties and their position within local communities, there is a need to better understand these users from a holistic perspective in order to enhance community resilience, which is the ability of individuals and groups to withstand short-and-long term shocks to their social infrastructure (Adger, 2000; Lew, 2014; Norris et al., 2008). Studies highlight the proactive role of the community in destination resilience building (Lawton and Weaver, 2015; Sheppard and Williams, 2015), but restrict their research to the views of local residents. The importance of technological innovations in relation to community resilience in rural areas has been noted, and research in these areas is gaining momentum. Evidence from the United Kingdom shows how rural digital inclusion is central in rural community empowerment and resilience from a socio-technological perspective (e.g., Roberts et al., 2017). The nexus between technology and resilience enables rural communities "to take responsibility and control of their rural development pathways" (Wilson 2010: 366), and thus transform work life and job markets in the foreseeable future (Ashmore et al., 2017). From a community resilience perspective, Airbnb and other short-term letting platforms represent an emerging yet fragmented research focus. There is acknowledgement of the importance of "investigating the benefits but also the costs of such activities in local communities" (Ioannides, 2016, p. 436), but the phenomenon of second homes has been overlooked. Similarly, there is an awareness of the proactive role second homeowners can play from both a destination resilience and adaptability perspective (Amore et al., 2018; Hall, 2016a), but there is no explicit mention of Airbnb and similar P2P platforms.

This dearth of research is problematic when considering the importance of understanding how different space users conceptualize their environment and the values that they attribute to it (Amore et al., 2018). In rural areas with second homes, Airbnb users tend to inhabit the same spaces as primary and secondary homeowners and consume the same services. Nevertheless, it can be assumed, due to their limited temporal involvement with the rural area, that their perceptions of rurality are more similar to those previously attributed to rural tourists in general. These Airbnb users then may ascribe different values to different local assets through their understanding of the area's rurality. Thus, they exist in a liminal rural space, being neither homeowners nor temporary rural consumers. This is an issue that has yet to be addressed in the literature.


**Methodology**


*Context and Data Collection*

In order to understand how Airbnb users understand rurality within mixed second homeowner and primary resident communities, we selected two case studies, namely Älvdalen municipality in Sweden and Conwy and Gwynedd in Wales. Both of these locations are rural areas with pre-existing second home communities as well as a growing number of available Airbnb rentals, albeit with the Swedish growth in Airbnb being much more recent. For the Swedish case, we selected the area of Älvdalen municipality, which also includes Idre, Idrefjäll, Fulufjället National Park and the areas of Älvdalen in the south (see Table 1). Idre and Älvdalen are located in the Dalarna region in mid-Sweden. Both are close to Norway and have traditionally been frequented by second-home owners as well as tourists. Visitors to the Dalarna region are predominantly domestic, with the next largest source markets being the other Nordic countries, the Netherlands, and Germany (SCB and Tillväxtverket, 2019). This

area is also a popular alpine skiing destination (Berglund, 2005) although only approximately 7,000 people permanently reside there (Älvdalens kommun, 2019). The area under study consisted of approximately 110 active rentals. Data were collected between July and October 2020, resulting in a total of 1,867 analysed reviews. These were predominantly in Swedish, but there were also reviews in other Scandinavian languages, German, Dutch, and English.

**Table 1 Main points of interest in Älvdalen municipality, Sweden**

| Point of interest | Location (# of Analysed Properties) |
|---|---|
| National Park | Storsätern (9); Björnliden (6); Storbo (3); Görddalen (6); Mörkret (5); Heden (3); Särna (3); Fulufjället National Park (1); Nornäs (1) |
| Skiing facilities | Höstsätern (2); Idrefjäll (25); Fjätervålen (4) |
| Body of water | Foskros (4); Drevdagen (1); Lövnäs (1); Åsen (1); Rämma (2); Karlsarvet (3); Brunnsberg (1); Näset (1) |
| Central/Close to major road | Älvdalen (4); Idre (11) |
| More rural isolated area | Evertsberg (8) |
| Nature reserve | Blyberg (5) |

The case study municipalities in the United Kingdom are more heavily populated than those in the Swedish context. Therefore, to ensure sound comparability between the two cases, we examined properties in municipalities which are close to a set of main natural points of interest (Table 2), in particular those with listed properties in the vicinity of Snowdonia National Park Visitor Centre, main natural attractions, and train stations. Two municipalities, Conwy and Gwynedd, met these criteria. The proximity to the Midlands and the North-West of England means that Conwy and Gwynedd are a desired rural location for temporary lettings among domestic tourists and underpins the existing data for average length of stay available before the rise of Airbnb in the United Kingdom (ONS, 2020). Between the two municipalities, 169 listed properties were analysed resulting in a total of 4,671 reviews being collected between July and October 2020. Unlike the Swedish data, the reviews were predominantly in English, with the remainder being in French, German, and Spanish.

**Table 2 Main points of interest in selected municipalities in Snowdonia, Wales**

| Point of interest | Municipality | Location (# of Analysed Properties) |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| National Park | Conwy | Glanaber Terrace/Cwm Penmachno (5); Ysgol Latymer (3); Carrog (4); Gwydir Forest park (1); Penmacho (27); Snowdonia National Park (41) |
| | Gwynedd | Beddgelert (25) |
| Body of water | Conwy | Capel Curig (8) |
| | Gwynedd | Trawsfynydd (13); Bala (15) |
| Train Station | Gwynedd | Dolwyddelan (17) |
| More rural isolated area | Conwy | Ysbyty Ifan (10) |

*Data Analysis*

We derived our empirical data from a netnographic content analysis of Airbnb and Vrbo as visualized on the website Airdna.co (n.d.), which compiles data from both websites and displays it as a map. Netnography is a method that is used to investigate people's interactions and postings online (Mkono and Markwell, 2014), but there is great variation in how the method is used (Mkono and Markwell, 2014). In this chapter, we undertook a content analysis to assess the data (Elo et al., 2014). The reviews were collected and translated if the language was not one of those spoken by the researchers. In order to analyse the data, the reviews were imported into an Excel file where different elements of the reviews were coded into different columns representing identified categories. An inductive coding process was used in order to ensure that the coding was representative of the data. To this end, one researcher was in charge of the analysis (Elo et al., 2014), while the others focused on the theoretical development of the topic. This ensured that the data analysis was interpreted through the literature but not biased by it. The reviews were categorized in terms of the location of the P2P properties as defined by Airdna.co (n.d.), the number of stars given by the guests indicating their level of satisfaction, the time range of the reviews for a certain property (from oldest to newest), and whether or not a host reply was present. The time range indicated provisionally if a property has been listed for a long time or not.

The data was sorted into four categories that described the content. These were: *facilities* (see Table 3), *location* (see Table 4), *nature/rurality* (see Table 5), *host* (see Table 6). Comments which fell outside of these classifications were placed into a category labelled *other,* but the majority were later redistributed to the other categories as no new categories emerged. This is a standard procedure in both content and thematic analyses (Elo et al., 2014; Walters, 2016). The reviews were assigned keywords, commonly known as codes, which were reworked as we collected more data. The final categories are those previously identified, and they reflect different aspects of the Airbnb experience, which were deemed worthy of note.

**Table 3 Examples of Facility-related reviews**

| Case Study | Review Extracts |
|---|---|
| Sweden | "The modern kitchen is wonderful, with plenty of utensils, pots and pans and dishes." |

| | |
|---|---|
| | "Beds galore, multiple kitchens, bathrooms and showers." |
| | "Cabin was adequately furnished." |
| Wales | "Very homely cottage" |
| | "The cottage is lovely and atmospheric" |
| | "Well equipped and cosy rustic farmhouse" |
| | "Very homely and cosy cottage" |

## Table 4 Examples of Location-related reviews

| Case Study | Review Extracts |
|---|---|
| Sweden | The property is "easy to find and close to hiking trails." |
| | The property is "close to a number of skiing slopes." |
| | "[…] the National park Fulufjäll is 15 min away by car." |
| | "very cosy cabin with a perfect location [läge] to the Njuperskärs waterfall!" |
| | The property is "[…] comfortable and close to everything but anyway isolated [avskilt]." |
| | "[…] the cottage only had two other cottages nearby and the rest was beautiful forest. Nonetheless we were still within walking distance of a shop […]." |
| | "Close to convenience store and village centre" |
| | "vicinity to shops and food places" |
| Wales | "It is a short walk into town if you'd like a drink at dinner" |
| | "Close to village shops" |
| | "Excellent location in a village with a shop and a pub" |
| | "No need to drive anywhere, cafes and restaurants just a short walk away" |
| | "Location is ideal with a great walk behind the cottage" |

| | |
|---|---|
| | "Really well-placed for walking and access to all the adventurous activities" |
| | "Located in a charming town right down the road from a Snowden Peak trail head and many more to boot" |
| | "Great location for a stroll along the river to Beddgelert" |
| | "Location is perfect, leafy and close to stunning walks" |
| | "Very good location for visiting Snowdonia National Park" |
| | "The location of the cottage is excellent!! In the heart of the beautiful Betws Y Coed" |
| | "Just a short walk from the centre of picturesque Betws Y Coed" |

**Table 5 Examples of Nature/rurality-related reviews**

| Case Study | Review Extracts |
|---|---|
| Sweden | "Comfortable and cosy accommodation close to nature." |
| | "The location js fantastic with nature […] 'on the doorstep'." |
| | "The house is in the proper Swedish wilderness next to the national park […]" |
| | "The Stuga *ist* perfect for relaxing and enjoying pure Swedish nature." |
| | "Exotically located cabin in a quiet and silent snow-filled forest […]." |
| | "We are a couple who wanted to get away from the city life and experience nature and the feeling of living in a cabin in the woods […]." |
| | "Lovely charming house far away from city life and noise." |
| | The cabin is placed in "[…] an idyllic forest environment." |
| | The cabin is "[…] in wonderful nature" |
| | The cabin is "with nice nature around" |
| | Nature described as "untouched" |
| | A cabin described as "surrounded by fantastic hosting [værtskab] and nature." |

| | |
|---|---|
| | "It is definitely a magical place!" |
| | A guest appreciates the "closeness to fantastic nature and magical mountains" |
| | A property described as a "[…] typically Swedish cottage […]." |
| | A property described as a "[…] small cottage typical in Sweden […]." |
| | Guests "[…] saw more reindeer than cars on that street" |
| | There are "many reindeer and some moose" |
| | A property in which there are chickens clucking described "[…] like out of a picture book […] |
| Wales | "Cute traditional stone cottage in a tiny village" |
| | "Lodge set in beautiful surroundings" |
| | "Romantic village idyll" |
| | "Romantic" |
| | "The cottage offered that level of quietness and isolation that we wanted" |
| | "It is pretty isolated (apart from a few surrounding houses) but that's exactly what we were after" |
| | "Chance to really get away from it all" |
| | "Absolutely idyllic location with stunning views" |
| | "The surrounding countryside and location are fabulous" |
| | "The cottage is a quiet valley, and the scenery was beautiful" |
| | "Awesome house in an idyllic location, immaculate and a great place to stay the weekend" |
| | "Beautiful view of Snowdon in the morning" |
| | "Spectacular views, history and countryside" |
| | "Such a beautiful village surrounded by jaw dropping scenery" |
| | "[…] stunning sunsets over the lake" |

| Case Study | Review Extracts |
|---|---|
| | "[…] a beautiful valley view and so many cute animals" |

**Table 6 Examples of Host-related reviews**

| Case Study | Review Extracts |
|---|---|
| Sweden | "Host was very responsive to messages […]." |
| | "The host was really nice and communicative :)" |
| | "The host was friendly and responsive." |
| | "We got tips and guide for places to visit […]." |
| | The host is "a great guide to the region[,] knows everything about the animals, the history, what's going on." |
| | The "host does not live at the place […]" |
| | The guests and the owner "[…] did not meet live […]." |
| | The owners tell that they "[…] aren't normally present [them]selves […]." |
| | "The cabin is located right next to the one [the host] uses." |
| | "The cottages they offer are perfectly located." |
| Wales | "Hosts are very welcoming" |
| | "Hosts could not have been more hospitable" |
| | "Host great in terms of communication and recommendations" |
| | "Recommendations for places to eat and her advice for climbing Snowdon was also brilliant" |
| | "Great tips for local walks" |
| | "[…] we appreciated the local recommendations from host" |
| | "Host very helpful and kept us very well informed and gave great advice on things to do on the local area" |

**Findings**

*Sweden*

In Sweden, the results of the netnography illustrate several Airbnb rental review trends. The first of these relates to the *facilities* category (Table 3), which includes elements related directly to the rented accommodation. These descriptions tended to focus on the interior attributes of the properties, such as kitchens, bathrooms, and bedrooms, with an emphasis on their utilitarian aspects. This emphasis on practical elements was also observed in relation to the second category, *location* (Table 4). There were several reviews which specifically highlighted the importance of the properties' proximity to different amenities, such as shops and convenience stores. In addition to the functional needs of the Airbnb users, the reviews in this category also underscored the properties' vicinity to key points of local interest, such as ski slopes, the national park, or a waterfall. Furthermore, guests were appreciative of properties which were not only close to the aforementioned points of local interest but also retained a sense of isolation. Therefore, these reviews are illustrative of visitor preferences for both convenient access to amenities and activities while retaining a sense of solitude.

While reviews in the *location* category included proximity to specific natural features, the *nature/rurality* category (Table 5) included vicinity to nature more broadly as well as more general observations related to the overall rural setting of the property. Many guests highly regarded the natural setting of the cabins, with several juxtaposing the rural with the urban, which highlights this continued view of the countryside as opposition to the city. Additionally, these natural surroundings were often viewed through the guest's own socio-cultural lens. This is particularly evident with non-Nordic foreign reviewers who emphasized the typically "Swedish" elements of the natural environment. For example, one reviewer referred to their rental as "a charming little traditional Swedish cabin with a warm homey feel […]." Furthermore, and less common in both foreign and domestic reviews, there is also mention of the rural as idyllic. While the word "idyllic" is only used in a handful of reviews, there are other, much more common synonyms used, such as "picturesque", "romantic", "magical", and "authentic". The inclusion of domestic farm animals as an important element of the rural experience can also be understood as part of this idyllic focus, with the presence of chickens clucking at one property being described as something "out of a picture book […]." The final focus of reviews in this category is on the rural space as wilderness, with one review referring to it as "untouched". This included mention of wild animals, such as moose and reindeer.

The final category, *host* (Table 6), was a less recurring topic within the reviews and was concentrated on the actual Airbnb host-guest interactions. These comments stressed the friendliness and communicativeness of the hosts while also underscoring the importance of the hosts' breadth of local knowledge. One guest noted that the Airbnb host was "a great guide to the region[,] knows everything about the animals, the history, what's going on." In some instances, the hosts were multiple property owners with a second home for personal use in the area. However, this is not to say that all hosts were present, and, in certain cases, the host was not a resident of the area at all. Thus, local host interaction with guests was not guaranteed, and, in these cases, local interaction may be assumed to have been limited given the lack of any reviews discussing locals.

In summary, Airbnb guests in the Swedish case are particularly interested in a rural experience which is rooted in solitude within a natural setting. In particular, there is an emphasis on the isolation of both properties and individuals. Given the relative newness of Airbnb in this setting, this could potentially lead to problems in the future wherein new properties built for guests will also destroy this very element of isolation that rural Airbnb users seek.

*Wales*

The data from Wales, as in Sweden, was separated into the identified four categories: *facilities*, *location*, *nature/rurality*, and *hosts*. In the Welsh context, the comments in the *facilities* (Table 3) category differed substantially from the Swedish findings in that they were more likely to be affective as opposed to utilitarian. Cottages were often referred to as "homely" or "rustic", emphasizing comfort and a rural aesthetic. The results from the reviews, which appear in the *location* category (Table 4), however, are more similar to those found in Sweden. More specifically, there is a significant emphasis placed on the property's proximity to attractions like Snowdonia National Park as well as local activities, such as walking and bike trails as well as outdoor activities. Interestingly, and something that was absent in the Swedish case, are reviews noting the proximity to a local village, which one reviewer described as "picturesque". Finally, and again similar to Sweden, additional comments in this category related specifically to local businesses, especially shops and restaurants. The reviews stress that there are "plenty of eateries at the local town" and how close most of these establishments are to the rental properties.

In the *nature/rurality* category (Table 5), reviews tend to emphasize the rustic nature of the listed property and the villages in the surrounding area. Comments referred, in particular, to the traditional elements of the listed cottages and the "romantic village idyll". This is interesting in comparison with the Swedish context where the rural was very much viewed as an experience apart from human activity. This is not to say that remoteness is not a quality noted by reviewers in Wales. In fact, one reviewer stated that "the cottage offered that level of quietness and isolation that [the user] wanted". There are further descriptions reinforcing the narrative of quietness and peacefulness of the site. For example, one review describes the area as "peace and quiet and stunning scenery", while another refers to the area as an "absolutely idyllic location with stunning views, offering the chance to really get away from it all". Thus, in Wales, rurality was framed both as quiet wilderness as well as historic idyllic village.

The final category, *host* (Table 6), was again similar to the Swedish case. In particular, hosts were highlighted as being very "hospitable" and "welcoming" with the hosts being noted as the point of contact for the rest of the community. The reviews acknowledge the role that hosts play in providing information and advice on where to go and what to do while at the property. Visitors value their recommendations and tips on walks and outdoor activities as well as where to go for dinner. One review in particular illustrates how the guests "felt very welcome and loved the little touches such as recommendations for local pubs/restaurants and important Welsh phrases". The latter is of interest as some guests appear to consider local culture and knowledge as important elements of the Welsh rural experience. Given the importance of local culture, as well as the previously noted emphasis on villages as points of interest, it is perhaps unsurprising that reviews in Wales explicitly mention the local population, an element that was absent in the Swedish reviews. For example, one review refers to the locals as "lovely friendly people full of good cheer". Another illustrates how the guests "felt very welcome and loved the little touches such as recommendations for local pubs/restaurants and important Welsh phrases". The latter is of interest as some guests appear to consider local culture and knowledge as important elements of the Welsh rural experience.

In summary, the reviews of the listed properties in Conwy and Gwynedd suggest that Airbnb guests seek a mix of remoteness from highly dense areas and proximity to picturesque cottages and villages. The reviews also suggest a preference for properties in tranquil and quiet areas surrounded by nature and an idealized Welsh rural landscape.

**Discussion**

Although the Swedish and Welsh cases are noticeably different in terms of the national origin of their key market as well as their level of Airbnb development, the findings for both have some marked similarities. In line with previous research on rural tourists (Bell, 2006; Holden and Lupton, 2017), the Airbnb guests in both locations stress the remoteness and quietness of the Airbnb locations, with their conceptualization of the local space's rurality emphasising it as untouched wilderness. Additionally, the perception of the local environment as a rural idyll appears in both contexts, albeit only among international guests in Sweden. In the case of Wales, it can be argued that the cultural elements appearing in the *host* category enhance this sense of a Welsh rural idyll wherein local traditional elements and the Welsh language itself impact upon guests' view of the area's rurality. Additionally, guests in both Sweden and Wales highlight the importance of the location of local amenities in proximity to their rented property. While understandably many of these reviews are specifically referring to ease of access to local attractions and leisure activities, there is also a focus on the availability of shops and eateries, spaces which are also of importance to both local residents and second homeowners. Thus, there is a similar level of spatial integration between these guests and the other rural homeowners, both primary and secondary, within the public sphere (Larsson and Müller, 2019; Tuulentie and Kietäväinen, 2020).

Integration with the local population is further enhanced by the host/guest relationship apparent in the Airbnb sharing model. While rural tourists often engage with the local population through service-based interactions, Airbnb users are more likely to highlight interpersonal communication with the local hosts, or lack thereof in the case of Sweden. However, when the hosts do interact with the Swedish guests, they are often members of the local second home community and perceived as fonts of local knowledge. This emphasis on the hosts as sources of information was also visible in Wales, but, in this context, there was additional reference to the wider local community and the guests' engagement with them. Therefore, the hosts, as well as the wider community in the case of Wales, play an integral role in the Airbnb guests' understanding of the local area. These important interpersonal, yet shallow, interactions are distinct from the deeper community connections, which influence second homeowners and primary residents' perceptions of the local rural space. In the case of the Airbnb guests, they are external actors who engage with, but are distinct from, the local socio-cultural environment. Consequently, their perceptions of local rurality may share elements from both primary and second homeowners while the lens through which they view the space remains exogenous.

The findings from this comparative study shed light on actor-related patterns in relation to the construct of rurality among the local community, second homeowners, and Airbnb guests in Älvdalen and Snowdonia. The importance of individual behaviours and perceptions is acknowledged in emerging research on destination resilience (Amore et al., 2018), and, as was noted by DuPois (2006) heterogenous perceptions of rurality can cause conflict at the local level. Therefore, it is necessary to fully understand this new local actor group, Airbnb users, and how they can contribute to the strengthening of community resilience against potential internal and external shocks. However, from a socio-technological perspective, the Airbnb online community has the potential to enhance the resilience of rural communities. Building on recommendations by Hall (2016a), the inclusion of Airbnb guests can assist in the development of inclusive destination-level planning. For example, Airbnb can act as a catalyst towards more inclusive and community-driven modes of destination metagovernance. Arguably, these new mechanisms of decision-making can empower second homeowners, rural residents and Airbnb guests as invested stakeholders and, in turn, contribute towards

rural community resilience. These initiatives can spark regime shifts and, in turn, reframe the local conceptualization of rurality to be inclusive of multiple viewpoints. Additionally, it can potentially provide a stronger grassroots-level of support in order to both adapt and respond to short-and-long term ecological triggers (Hall, 2016b).

## Conclusions

Through an analysis of Airbnb reviews from Sweden and Wales, in this chapter we have sought to explore guest understanding of local rural spaces, which are also popular second home destinations. While it was noted that rural Airbnb guests exhibited similar views of rurality as those expressed by more general rural tourists, their emphasis on amenities and interpersonal interactions with the local community are more easily observable among second and primary homeowners. However, due to the brevity of these community interactions, the Airbnb guests are still external actors albeit with their perceptions of rurality partially moderated by the local community's viewpoints. From a community resilience perspective, it is essential to include all relevant viewpoints in order to "build […] consensus around destination resilience planning" (Amore et al., 2018, p. 245). Therefore, it is important that those responsible for local community resilience planning understand these P2P users better in order to ensure that future strategies are inclusive of the breadth of communities, both permanent and temporary, that occupy rural space at any given moment.

It should be noted that this chapter has several limitations. In particular, we only collected data on Airbnb users. Future research needs to also engage with the local permanent resident and second home communities in order to better understand the differences in spatial perceptions. Furthermore, rurality is a complex phenomenon, while in this chapter we have offered a predominantly generalist viewpoint. Future work needs to also look at the intersections of rurality in these rural spaces with race, gender, class, and so on. This is especially important given the potential demographic differences between primary homeowners, second homeowners, and Airbnb guests. In particular, future research needs to provide a better understanding of Airbnb users in these spaces given their growing presence in rural locations.

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