



Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

## PRE-EVENT BRIEF

# ESPON Peer Learning Workshop on Housing and Multi-locality

Virtual

17 March 2022, 10.00-13.00 (EET)



## Introduction



The process of suburbanisation dominated western and northern European metropolitan areas between the 1950s and 1990s. Since the 1990s, European metropolitan areas have again experienced a process of population recentralisation (Dembski et al., 2019). The recent **COVID-19 pandemic** has, however, changed this trend and offers a new opportunity for rural areas.

During the lockdown, much work was done from homes and remote locations by using Zoom, Skype, and other digital solutions. The pandemic has not only affected the notion of work but also initiated people to use their **second homes** as a more permanent settlement, or enticed many others to buy one (Cox, 2021). It is also argued that younger generations who work in fields and occupations which allow telework have used this an opportunity to move out from their expensive city apartments and find more pleasant environments in rural areas.

The increasing investments that are made to purchase a second home out of the large cities and regional capitals have resulted in rapidly rising market prices for property in the countryside. It is argued that the COVID pandemic is a “game-changer” and that once the digital ways of work have been tested, these will become more widely used (Ballentine and Kantor, 2021). The other proposal to predict the post-COVID trends in housing market outlines the fact that **multi-locationality** will increase because people who own second homes cannot fully disconnect their lives from cities – full-time telework in the long-term perspective is not a realistic scenario and the lack of local services, and children’s day-care or schooling options, does not allow teleworkers to reside in their rural homes only.

Along other Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway and Denmark), multi-locational work was already significantly large in Finland before the COVID pandemic (Ojala & Pyöriä, 2018). Public authorities in the Nordic countries are currently exploring the impact of the COVID pandemic on remote working and the housing markets in rural areas (ESPON, 2021). In Finland, several policy processes at the national-level have started to address the issue of multi-locationality and its possible impact on **smaller regional cities outside regional capital cities, “seutukaupungit” in Finnish**. Firstly, the governmental project “How multi-locationality changes regional and population structure” looked for answers on the effect of multi-locationality on housing. Secondly, the Ministry of Environment of Finland launched the project “The availability of governmental services improves the vitality of the regions and the possibilities for working, studying and living multi-locationally”. Based on these ongoing policy processes and the demand for territorial evidence on second homes and multi-locationality, ESPON has mobilised its evidence into an online workshop to provide input and study results from the recent research.

## Objective

The ESPON Peer Learning Workshop on housing and multi-locationality aims to give insight into the present policy processes targeted to the context of smaller cities in regions and combines these discussions with the presentation of results of the ESPON project SUPER (Sustainable Urbanization and land-use Practices in European Regions) which analysed the main patterns in European urbanisation processes.

The discussions during the workshop will bear the following questions:

1. How is multi-locationality seen, addressed in, and how does it affect smaller cities (“seutukaupungit”)?
2. What is the effect of multi-locationality on housing?
3. How do the available services affect living/housing possibilities?
4. What can be the role and level of impact of governmental services?

The workshop addresses policymakers responsible for national and regional planning in Finland and its neighbouring countries. It further invites researchers and stakeholders that were involved in the ESPON SUPER

project to discuss the research outcomes from the current COVID-19 pandemic and its territorial impacts, and share the evidence on national and regional planning practice with regard to urbanisation, suburbanisation, and counter-urbanisation.

## Evidence from ESPON SUPER

The ESPON SUPER project investigated the drivers behind and the mechanisms of land-use changes and the extent to which these changes are affected by territorial governance and spatial planning interventions and has recently delivered its findings (see <https://www.espon.eu/super>). This includes an overview of land-use changes in Europe since 2000 and land-use modelling up to 2050, an overview of over 230 interventions (e.g. strategies, plans, fiscal measures, and investments) and their impacts on urbanisation. Eleven of these were examined as in-depth case studies.

The SUPER project found that it is possible to design interventions that adjust the payoffs or orientation of stakeholders, and thus their behaviour in the development process, to more sustainable ends using a combination of carrots, sticks, and sermons. The case studies signalled a need for interventions to be embedded into a clear and comprehensive strategy or vision that covers all relevant topics and involves all relevant stakeholders. A final consideration with respect to temporal sustainability is the durability of policies (e.g., stability of funding and vulnerability to political/economic cycles). In other words, to effectively steer long-term processes such as urbanisation, the measures themselves should have a degree of longevity.

ESPON recently launched a research project to investigate the territorial impacts of COVID-19 and to analyse different policy responses among European regions and cities. This research project, scheduled from June 2021 to June 2022, is being carried out by a consortium of 11 partners from across Europe. It focuses on the geographical patterns of the pandemic and its territorial and socioeconomic characteristics, the factors influencing the level of exposure to the virus, its impact on poverty, social inequalities and social exclusion, the efficiency of various policy approaches across European regions, the importance of multi-level and cross-sectoral governance mechanisms, and the means by which territorial cooperation can be strengthened during such moments of crises (ESPON, 2021). The findings that arise from this project seek to bring insight into the current evolution of settlement patterns in the Nordic region.

## Agenda (Finnish Time)

**10:00-10:15**

### Introduction

Moderated by **Dr. Ingmar Pastak** (University of Tartu, Estonia)

Welcome by **Prof. Dr. Ir. Luuk Boelens** (Coordinator of ESPON Transnational Outreach) and **Mrs. Sanna Andersson** (Ministry of the Environment)

**10:15 - 11:15**

### Session 1: Urbanisation patterns before and during the COVID-19 outbreak

Moderated by **Dr. Ingmar Pastak** (University of Tartu, Estonia)

(1) ESPON SUPER project: Sustainable Urbanisation and land-use Practices in European Regions by **Dr. David Evers** (Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency; ESPON SUPER)

Q&A

(2) "Remote work and multilocality post-COVID-19" by **Mrs. Linda Randall** (Nordregio)

Q&A

**11:15-11:30**

### Break

**11:30-12:00**

**Pitching session and discussion**

Moderated by **Dr. Ingmar Pastak** (University of Tartu, Estonia)

**Session 2: Examples of witnessing and addressing multi-locality**

(1) Governmental Project: "How multi-locality changes regional and population structure" by **Mr. Mika Ristimäki** (Ministry of Environment of Finland)

(2) Perspective of a small city (seutukaupungit) by **Mrs. Noora Pajari** (Mayor of Keuruu city)

**12:00-12:40**

**Open debate on following questions:**

*How can governmental services improve the living possibilities in the era of multi-locality?*

*What kinds of interventions and policies will be needed to address multi-locality?*

Participants: **Mr. Mika Ristimäki, Mrs. Noora Pajari, Mrs. Linda Randall, Dr. David Evers.**

**12:40-12:50**

**Conclusions**

Short sum-up and key take-aways by **Mr. Mika Ristimäki** (Ministry of Environment of Finland) *(tbc)*

## References

Ballentine, C., Kantor, A. (2021) Why buying a second or even third home is becoming more popular than ever. Bloomberg Wealth, October 2021. Accessible at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-10-15/why-buying-a-second-home-is-real-estate-s-newest-trend>

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Dembski, S., Sykes, O., Couch, C., Desjardins, X., Evers, D., Osterhage, F., Siedentop, S. and Zimmermann, K. (2019) 'Reurbanisation and suburbia in Northwest Europe : A comparative perspective on spatial trends and policy approaches', Progress in Planning, 150.

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