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Introduction

THE BAKERS

It's an early Saturday morning at the beginning of June in Rangeley, a small town tucked away in the western mountains of northern Maine. After weeks of anticipation and a long night of traveling, Paul and Carol Baker have just awoken to enjoy the first day of the summer season.¹ They make their way from their lofted bedroom into the kitchen downstairs, opening the dark oak cabinets to find their favorite mugs as they wait for the kettle to whistle. Once their tea has finished steeping, they open the sliding glass door to the back porch where they sit on Adirondack chairs that face the lake, a pristine body of water that rests beneath a vast mountain range. They sit there quietly drinking their tea and listening to loons as the sun slowly rises, making its way through the white pines hovering above.

They spend the rest of their morning chipping away at their “opening chores.” After having been away since October, the shrubs need to be pruned, the grass needs to be cut, and this year's garden needs to be planted. But they don't really mind. Carol is an amateur botanist who enjoys spending her days outside among the flowers and trees. Since there are no other obligations—Paul doesn't have to work, Carol doesn't have to attend board meetings—the rest of their afternoon is free. They decide to hike Bald Mountain. At the observation tower at the top, they see Saddleback Mountain, where locals and visitors alike spend their winters skiing and snowboarding. They see Rangeley and Mooselookmeguntic Lakes, where families go boating and fishing all summer long. And they take in the magnificent view that

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transforms this small town in the summer months from about a thousand permanent residents to nearly five thousand, as second homeowners like them populate its shores and slopes.

After the hike, Paul and Carol decide they don't want to drive to Rangeley's Main Street to eat at the Red Onion or Parkside & Main, where many people flock to at this time of year. They would rather have dinner alone. After grabbing provisions for dinner at the Farmer's Daughter, a small grocer, they find themselves where their day began, on the back porch listening to the birds and the waves that gently crash against the rocky shoreline of the lake. They stay there until the sun has gone down and the stars have come out in the sky.

Rangeley is exactly the type of place Paul and Carol were looking for when they were on a hunt for a second home in the early 2000s. Paul had recently retired from his law practice and Carol had stepped back from her teaching career. After spending over three decades in their hometown, they were ready to be somewhere entirely different. Paul and Carol enjoyed many aspects of their primary home, but to them it felt too urban. They live in a densely populated neighborhood where they often run into neighbors on their way to the local co-op or independent bookstore. Over the years, they longed for houses more spread apart. They longed for green space and seclusion. They longed for rural life. They looked around at places in Massachusetts within easy driving distance from their permanent residence. But the lakes were too small. The houses were too close together. It didn't feel rural enough. Although neither Paul nor Carol had ever lived in Maine before buying a second home in Rangeley, Paul had remembered a hiking trip he took up north to Rangeley as a child with his father. It was a time in his life he remembered fondly. Once he brought Carol to see it for herself, they knew it was the place for them. Carol grew up in rural Pennsylvania, and driving down the dirt roads in Rangeley that wind deep through the woods reminded her of home. She felt comfort in the familiarity. Work and education pulled them away from these types of places, and they moved frequently from city to city up and down the East Coast following the next opportunity. A second home in Rangeley would make it all worth it.

In Rangeley, they purchased a house worth nearly \$1 million that, in Carol's words, was "the ugliest place I've ever seen in my life." They did not buy it for the house but for the thirty-two acres of abutting land and nearly 400 feet of waterfront property upon which it sat. They had no interest in renovating this "ugly" home, and they even kept items like couches and dishware left from the previous owners that to Carol were still "serviceable."

They leave this house untouched because most days are spent outside of it. Every morning, they sit on their porch that overlooks the water, drinking tea, reading the paper, and listening to the birds. When they feel so inclined, they hike Bald Mountain, kayak on the lake to find a loon family, or walk the dirt road in search of a bald eagle. Their nights are spent under the stars. This is the Rangeley they wait for all winter long. It is their quiet, unpopulated refuge set in nature. And being here makes them feel like they are the rural people they had left behind long ago.

Paul and Carol are not that involved in most aspects of local life in Rangeley, preferring to keep to themselves. But they do spend much of their down time patrolling the lake for invasive species on behalf of the Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust, a land trust organization dedicated to conservation across the region. They have begun taking classes on invasive species to educate second homeowners and locals alike on how to preserve and protect the waterways. They also donate to this organization's vast conservation efforts. This includes annual donations of time and money. It also includes a lump-sum donation of the thirty-two acres of land that abuts their property. This protects their vision of Rangeley as an isolated refuge set in nature. And it secures their place within it.

THE FLYNNS

Two hundred miles south, in Boston, Richard and Doris Flynn are ready for their Saturday in the city. They have just arrived at their harborside condo after a two-hour drive from their hometown the night before. They start the morning as they do on most weekends throughout the year; once their coffee has brewed, they move from their kitchen with stainless-steel appliances to their harbor-facing living room that is lined with floor-to-ceiling windows. They spend the next hour watching the sun rise over Boston Harbor, reflecting off the downtown skyline.

Doris doesn't have much time to lounge around. In a few hours she needs to make her way from their condo to Fenway for a weekly class she has been taking on abstract expressionism at the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA). It'll take her about an hour to get from one neighborhood to the other, but she relishes parking her car in the building's garage for the weekend and traversing Boston by foot and public transit. Along the route she takes, she can envelop herself in the city's unique revolutionary history, passing Faneuil Hall Marketplace and the Old State House, preserved historic buildings nestled within the city's modernist skyscrapers. At Park Street Station, she can

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take the E Line to the museum's front steps. For the next hour she sits next to other erudite strangers listening to a lecture on the latest Hokusai exhibit, an artist whose work depicted the "floating world" of urban opulence during the Edo period in Japan.

Come evening, she meets Richard at the Huntington Theatre, where they spend their evening absorbed in this season's latest play. When the show is over, they can enjoy the longer walk to Copley Station where they will pick up the T to make their way back to their condo, contemplating the architecture as they walk toward Boylston Street—the McKim building of the Boston Public Library, the bell in the campanile of the Old South Church, and the reflection of Henry Richardson's Romanesque Trinity Church in the minimalist Hancock Tower.

This is what Doris and Richard Flynn missed most about Boston, the place where they formed their nascent identities as "city people." They had lived there together for nearly a decade while they were both attending college and in the early stages of their careers, loving the city and the life they fashioned there. According to Doris, it's where they "began." They made the decision to leave when Doris was accepted into a graduate program hundreds of miles away, a move that ended up being a permanent relocation for professional opportunities that materialized for them both. They said goodbye to their Boston life. They bought a house, raised their three children, and put down roots. Their home sits on two and a half acres. They have a barn with a loft, a paddock for horses, and access to riding trails nearby. Doris and Richard enjoyed their hometown but have grown tired of the lack of anonymity in small-town life. After having not lived in Boston for decades, there was always a part of them left unfinished. "We have the country," Doris remarked, "but we long for the city."

In Boston, they hadn't wanted to buy a second home in a so-called up-and-coming or trendy neighborhood. They wanted a neighborhood with access to the part of the city they knew and loved, areas close to downtown where affluent, transient people like them were increasing in numbers year after year. Their condo on the waterfront, worth nearly \$1 million, provides quick access to the Freedom Trail, a pedestrian path connecting places like Paul Revere's house, Faneuil Hall, Boston Common, museums, churches, buildings, burial grounds, and parks celebrating Boston's revolutionary history.² At any point they can hop on the T and be at the MFA or Symphony Hall in Boston's newly designated Avenue of the Arts. This part of the city contains the memory of Boston they hold close, a city rife with art, music, theater, and rich history.

Richard and Doris don't feel they have the time or occasion to attend neighborhood civic events or block parties. When not traversing the Freedom Trail or Avenue of the Arts, Doris spends her sporadic days in Boston volunteering for a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting public art in her neighborhood. Annually, they support the institutions they value; they write checks to the Museum of Fine Arts, the Huntington Theatre, and the Freedom Trail Foundation. Funneling resources into these institutions and organizations secures their vision of Boston as a world-class arts and culture destination. These practices also help Richard and Doris tell a story about who they are as *urban people*.

THE FLYNNNS AND THE BAKERS

The Flynnns and the Bakers are longtime friends who understand each other's motivations for second homeownership as entirely incongruent. The Flynnns, city people whose hometown feels too insular and small, can't imagine choosing a more formulaic and typical rural vacation destination like the Bakers. The Bakers, who identify deeply with rural life and have grown tired of the density and pace of their hometown, quip about how a loon's call on a dark summer night might frighten the Flynnns. Yet the two couples are not as different as they seem.

The Bakers are not from the city, and the Flynnns are not from the country. The couples live no more than two miles apart from each other in the suburbs of a major metropolitan region in New England. It is a place that offers a blend of everything. Paul and Carol can kayak in the river that borders downtown, walk an extensive hiking and biking trail nearby, and frequent a number of state parks within a short driving distance. Richard and Doris can attend museums, watch art-house films at a local independent cinema, and even drive to watch the symphony play outside during the summer months. This region seems to have it all. Despite this abundance of amenities, the Bakers and the Flynnns each expressed a personal dissonance with this place. To the Bakers, this community is not rural enough; they spend their days longing for the secluded, slower pace of life they experienced as children deep in the woods. To the Flynnns, it is not urban enough; they have spent decades wanting to re-create the days they first met, walking around the bustling streets of Boston. They both longed for the places in which they used to live.

Although this community feels too diluted to give them the sense of place they longed for, it's where they decided to remain, forgoing attachment

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to urban and rural places for access to a range of work and educational opportunities for themselves and their children that they could not find in places like Rangeley or Boston. This small city, in Doris's words, is "nice." And it is resource rich. It is where Paul and Richard set up their successful law practice, where Carol and Doris obtained their master's degrees, and where their children attended a highly ranked school system. Deciding to stay there opened a world of opportunity for their families. But neither the Flynns nor the Bakers had to make the choice between access to resources in their hometowns and lifestyles they longed for in the city or country. They had enough time and money to have *both*.

Second Homeownership as a Social Problem

The Bakers and the Flynns are among the growing number of second homeowners shaping real estate markets, community, and inequality in the United States.³ This phenomenon is typically associated with rural destinations, as people seek out natural amenities and lifestyles along the shores of lakes and oceans and in the woods and mountains.⁴ However, highly affluent neighborhoods in global cities are beginning to witness a rise in this form of homeownership as urban real estate has transformed into a new asset class for elites and as people now seek out cities as places for leisure, travel, and consumption.⁵

The rise and geographic spread of second-home purchases have come at a cost for the communities that host them, placing immense pressure on housing markets. This is particularly true in more recent years against the backdrop of a nationwide housing shortage.⁶ In 2021, the demand for vacation homes began to skyrocket, far outpacing existing-home sales for the first time in recent history.⁷ Lured by low interest rates and mortgage fees, viable remote work options, and an escape from disease risk and pandemic life, people began buying vacation homes at unprecedented rates.⁸ This devoured the nation's already tenuous housing supply. Some estimates suggest that during this period, the United States had a deficit of nearly four million housing units.⁹ Under these tight market conditions, every purchase made by a second homeowner was consequential, both limiting the supply of homes that could be used as primary residences and failing to put another home up for sale to equalize supply and demand—it was a one-two punch.¹⁰

But second homeowners' influence on housing markets predates the pandemic housing-boom years. They have been altering real estate markets for decades. They are more likely to make highly competitive, all-cash

offers, straining markets in both urban and rural areas.¹¹ These types of purchases are known to monopolize scarce housing supply and to drive up real estate prices, shutting out new primary homebuyers and pushing out permanent residents who cannot keep up with increased property taxes or rents. Second-home destinations across the city and the country are among the most highly racially and economically segregated parts of America.¹²

Second homeowners who do take out mortgages often over-leverage themselves to do so. This contributed significantly to the housing foreclosure crisis of 2008, in which millions of Americans defaulted on their loans. During this period, second-home buyers contributed to more mortgage debt than primary-home buyers, making them more likely to default on loans.¹³ Places with more second-home buying saw bigger booms and busts. Analysts even suggest that the housing crisis in the early 2000s would have been less severe had it not been for the precipitous rise in second-home buying.¹⁴

Yet housing markets are not the only place where second homeowners have left their mark. They also strain community dynamics.¹⁵ Rural communities have been grappling with the presence of second homeowners for over a century, as productive economies like farming and logging have steadily declined. Many rural towns are dependent on people like second homeowners to populate their Main Streets throughout the year, relying on them to build homes, buy groceries, dine out at restaurants, and buy souvenirs as they consume the bucolic mountains, waterfront, forest, and countryside. More recent accounts highlight how this in-migration has fueled complex tensions with permanent residents.

During the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic, reports quickly multiplied about wealthy New Yorkers fleeing their neighborhoods and taking up residence in their second homes on the shores of Long Island, New Jersey, and the Hamptons. They did so to avoid disease risk and to live more comfortably under conditions of lockdown, and many did so without regard for the communities that hosted them. As more cities began shutting schools and offices down, remote rural vacation communities beyond the New York metropolitan region began facing the unwelcome influx of out-of-towners looking to escape. Some municipalities banned out-of-towners altogether,¹⁶ some required a two-week quarantine upon arrival,¹⁷ and some locals took it upon themselves to ensure the safety of their communities.

In one instance in Vinalhaven, a remote island town in Maine, “vigilantes” made sure out-of-staters could not leave the premises of their second home. With guns in tow, a group of locals cut down a tree to block the unwelcome visitor to ensure they could not spread Covid-19 to the town.¹⁸

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People feared the spread of disease, max-capacity ICUs, and strain on everyday resources. Despite warnings, many still flocked to their second homes. Such disregard put permanent residents in harm's way, some of whom lived in places that didn't even have so much as a pharmacy, let alone medical facilities, staff, or supplies. But there was nothing these towns could do. Second homeowners still came. And business and political leaders did not want to jeopardize their economic base.

Whereas rural towns feel the presence of second homeowners year in and year out, cities have begun to feel their absence. Entire buildings and blocks of affluent city neighborhoods now appear dark and lifeless, nearly void of people, as transient, non-permanent residents continue buying urban real estate.¹⁹ Some buy as a safe-deposit box, some buy to hide dubiously acquired cash, some buy as a place to crash after the symphony or before jet-setting around the world, and some buy to rent out to other transient people on third-party platforms. Regardless of the intent, the lights are turned off most of the year.²⁰

Analysts contemplate what will become of neighborhoods if this trend continues. Some worry that the lack of permanent residents will undermine collective community life. "My block is like a ghost town," confessed Gay Talese to the *New York Times* about his Upper East Side neighborhood. "It's dark on this street at night, and I'm not talking about the summer people in the Hamptons."²¹ Others fear that cities will become nothing but places for the super-rich to park their money as real estate rapidly grows as a new asset class. This has led politicians across the globe to vow to ban foreign homebuyers: "No more foreign wealth being parked in homes that people should be living in," Canada's Justin Trudeau declared to his constituents.²² And many point to how these collective purchases fuel neighborhood change, in which the middle class is being priced out by the upper class, sending a ripple effect of unaffordability and churn throughout a given city.²³

In no uncertain terms, second homeownership is a social problem. It is a public issue in which these collective practices, and the structures that enable them, accumulate to produce material consequences for others. These more high-profile accounts present a full picture of the costs of second homeownership for host communities. Through their high-end purchases they strain local housing markets and through their presence and absence they alter community life for permanent residents.

But what is missing from these accounts is a fuller picture of how and why specific people deepen these dynamics that disadvantage host communities. Who are some of these second homeowners? What motivates their

second-home purchases? How and why do they decide to allocate time, money, and resources within their host communities beyond their transactions in real estate? How do they justify their in-migration? And how does this differ, if at all, across the city and the country?

What is also missing is a more critical look at how second homeowners *and* the places left behind stand to benefit from these processes. How do some people benefit from second homeownership aside from growing an investment portfolio? How and why do they decide to allocate time, money, and resources *between* their primary homes and host communities? How does this not only disadvantage host communities but *advantage* primary-home communities? These gaps motivate the inquiry in this book. A story about second homeownership is not just a story about host communities. It is a larger story about what motivates people to wield their privileges within and between geographies in the twenty-first century.



Privileging Place picks up where headlines and housing reports leave off, following the accounts of upper-middle-class people who buy second homes in the city and the country and live permanently in affluent, mostly suburban communities. I spent more than two years talking to second homeowners in Rangeley, Maine, and Boston, Massachusetts, about how they made housing decisions and interacted with the communities around them. What I learned sheds light on part of what is driving second homeownership as a social phenomenon and some of its complex local influence.

The conversations I had about second homes with the people I met turned into conversations about the identities they tied to place—who they felt they were and where they felt they really belonged. They talked at length about what they felt urban and rural places should look and feel like and why they felt so aligned with these types of places. The ideas they had about Rangeley and Boston, and how they saw themselves within them, explained their actions in these communities, including where they decided to buy, how much they were willing to spend, how they developed and maintained social ties, which nonprofit and civic organizations they donated to or volunteered for, which commercial establishments they patronized, and which community meetings they decided to attend, if at all. Understanding the meaning they gave to their actions provided a piece to the larger puzzle of what motivated them to participate in sustaining the larger social problems across the city and the country detailed above. Theoretically, this book makes a case

for understanding how such cultural orientations to place help explain some people's second-home purchases and local community influence.²⁴

However, as my conversations unfolded, I learned that to really understand what motivated the people I met, their actions in second-home communities, and their broader influence on the social world, I had to understand their relationships to the places where many of their stories began—the suburbs. They talked in detail about why they did not feel like they could tie their identities to their hometowns but why they remained there, even when they would rather have been somewhere else. While I initially set out to study the relationship between second homeownership in urban and rural areas, I realized I had a bigger story to tell, one distinct from popular and academic accounts that typically explore what second homeowners do and why within the delimited sphere of their second-home host communities.²⁵ Through my conversations, I came to understand that the actions of the second homeowners I met in Rangeley and Boston were always relational with actions in their hometowns—and in ways that advantaged these communities. This book not only offers unique analytical insight into what explained some second homeowners' everyday practices across both urban and rural host communities. It also provides insight into how and why affluent people leverage their privileges across multiple places *at once*.²⁶

The Argument: The Pursuit of Place Identity

For the people I met, buying a second home was a way to balance the desire for a meaningful connection to place in the city or the country, while also holding onto material interests in the suburbs. My argument is that second homeownership was a *place-identity project*, in which they used place-specific meanings, attributes, and practices to both attach their sense of self to certain places and engage in everyday actions to accomplish this aspect of their identity.²⁷ These tensions between viewing the second home as a source of place identity and their hometowns as sites of opportunity shaped why they bought a second home, how they interacted with the communities they traversed, and why they decided to remain in their hometowns when they would rather have been in the city or the country.

The place-identity projects of the people I talked with were motivated by *felt place identities*, in which they more strongly attached their sense of self to the places where they used to live—the city or the country—rather than the places where they permanently resided. Although most of my sample resided permanently in suburbs, they often thought of themselves as

fundamentally city or country people. They echoed more critical academic and popular discourse about the suburbs as alienating, places devoid of a coherent character.²⁸ While once framed as the American dream, offering its residents the best of all worlds with ample greenspace and access to commercial and institutional amenities, the people I met found this liminal and diluted space as the worst of all worlds and the best of none—it was neither urban nor rural enough.²⁹

Although their hometowns did not provide them with a sense of place, they made locational choices to move and stay there for access to material resources, including schools, jobs, housing, and what they thought was a nice quality of life. Viewing their hometowns as sites of opportunity, the people I met engaged in everyday practices that reified the notions they held that these communities were resource rich. Using time and money, they supported a wealth of local institutions like schools, health-care infrastructure, and an array of nonprofit and civic organizations. And yet they strategically chose not to invest in these institutions in their second-home host communities because supporting these institutions did not align with—and might have undermined—their sense of place. *Opportunity hoarding* was therefore a key piece of their place-identity projects. The decision to remain in affluent communities and uplift them, at the expense of other places, maps onto enduring methods of social closure, in which affluent people concentrate material resources in already affluent communities, systematically denying other people and places access to the very locational advantages they create.³⁰

The people I met leveraged their social position to purchase second homes in the city and the country to recover the sense of place they did not find in their hometowns, giving them the feeling of being in a distinctly *urban* or distinctly *rural* place they desired, transforming their place identities from *felt* into *projects*. Privilege was thus central to their relationship with place identity. Because they only lived there part-time, their projects were developed around narrow and archetypal notions of what best characterized these places, viewing Rangeley as an isolated refuge set in nature and Boston as a site of elite high-cultural consumption. These meanings, however, were not neutral or benign. They built their sense of place from processes that have historically disadvantaged urban and rural people and places. In Rangeley, the people I met maintained notions of *rural* that depended on this community being less resource rich than their own. For the people I met in Boston, their ideas of *urban* depended on the city's historic and contemporary concentrated affluence and enduring racial segregation.

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The people I met did not simply emplace themselves where they could feel more like a city or country person. A central feature of their place-identity projects was to engage in everyday practices to make these places look more like how they imagined them. Using an array of philanthropic, consumptive, and voluntaristic practices, they supported local nonprofit institutions that have become stewards of the city and the country, aligning their second-home communities with their envisioned sense of place. In Rangeley, the people I talked with supported a land trust organization to ensure the country remained an isolated refuge set in nature. These practices supplanted supporting other public goods like health care, housing, or internet service that would have benefited permanent residents. In Boston, the people I met supported select cultural institutions to ensure the city remained a site of elite, high-cultural consumption. This contributed to larger processes of neighborhood change and unequal resource distribution in the city. Taken together, the practices associated with their projects helped reproduce the very conditions of spatial inequalities upon which they built their sense of place.

The people I interviewed strategically segmented the various facets of associational life typically related to community—primary and secondary ties, institutional and philanthropic engagement, and place identity—between the multiple places where they lived and owned second homes. This segmentation was patterned by their deeply held notions of what urban, rural, and suburban places were and should have been. Their selective investments in these communities helped align the places where they lived and owned second homes with their imagined ideals, emboldened by broader structural conditions that make places dependent on private practices and philanthropic support of people like them for local growth. Such everyday actions guaranteed parts of the city remained sites of high culture, parts of the country remained places of unadulterated nature, and their hometowns remained a repository of institutional privileges. In the end, their practices ensured that every place was made for people like them.

How Cultural Processes Can Explain Spatial Inequality

To understand how and why some second homeowners' cultural orientations to place can matter for explaining patterns in the social world, I want to take a step back to draw the connections between everyday people, their motivations for social action in local places, and broader patterns of spatial inequality in society.

It is impossible to understand social inequality without understanding its relationship to place. Seemingly national-level structures are built on social dynamics that play out in local places.³¹ Residential segregation, or the spatial division by race and class, has served as the building block for virtually every major national-level problem, from the racial wealth gap to racial and economic health disparities.³² Gentrification enhances wealth accumulation and resource access for gentrifiers in non-white working-class communities while systematically denying longtime residents the very locational advantages gentrifiers create.³³ What is colloquially understood as NIMBYism (not in my backyard) patterns national-level housing affordability and resource access. It is sometimes framed as a process in which powerful local stakeholders fight against policies that affect the use and exchange value of their neighborhoods that might make them more inclusive.³⁴ These examples illuminate how local problems serve as the foundation for macro-level systems of stratification that pattern everything from housing precarity to wealth inequality to health disparities.

Sociologists study a range of social actors who have a hand in shaping these local-level processes. They study political and business elites who have top-down influence, defining, for instance, national policies that influence the unequal distribution of mortgage acquisitions.³⁵ They study middlemen like real estate agents, appraisers, building inspectors, landlords, and civic leaders who are involved in defining land use and value and sorting people, goods, and resources across communities in unequal ways.³⁶ Sociologists also study everyday social actors like longtime residents, doormen, and squatters whose practices define the contours of local life as they resist or navigate neighborhood change.³⁷ They even study relatively advantaged and affluent residents like gentrifiers, NIMBYs, or even billionaires who use a range of economic, social, and cultural capital to shape communities for everyone.³⁸ Local-level processes of spatial inequalities like segregation, gentrification, and resource hoarding come to life and pattern macro-level systems of stratification through the aggregate practices of this wide range of people.

In this book, I explore second homeowners as one such group who are involved in shaping many of these processes. Second homeowners are found in some of the most highly segregated parts of America, from cities of extremes to racially and economically bifurcated destinations rich in natural amenities.³⁹ Second homeowners are gentrifiers, buying property in rural amenity-rich communities and in highly affluent urban neighborhoods, fueling increased property values, and participating in creating a new neighborhood milieu.⁴⁰ Second homeowners are also linked to NIMBYism across a

range of geographies, guiding land-use policies and practices to serve their interests.⁴¹ They are part of many of the major social problems that a range of environmental, stratification, urban, and rural scholars are motivated to understand. An analysis of second homeowners provides insight into the multiple social actors who shape place-based inequality in ways that coalesce to shape macro-level stratification.

There are a variety of factors that could explain why and how second homeowners shape spatial inequality in communities. These include political-economic conditions, technological advances, racial inequality, and historic and contemporary housing market practices. I focus specifically on the place-based cultural motivations of some second homeowners themselves as one factor that explains how and why they pattern their community engagements in ways that connect to larger patterns of social inequality.⁴²

People's cultural orientations to place are valuable to understand as social scientists endeavor to make sense of local-level community processes. Scholars who study community life across urban and rural places like Japonica Brown-Saracino and David Hummon argue that the meanings people give to places have the power to motivate action and inform people's everyday practices in ways that can structure the form and function of communities.⁴³ Thomas Gieryn developed this argument in his formative essay on place:

Places are endlessly made, not just when the powerful pursue their ambition through brick and mortar . . . but also when ordinary people extract from continuous and abstract space a bounded, identified, meaningful, named, and significant place.⁴⁴

How people think and feel about urban, rural, and suburban communities in part explains where people move and why they move there. Gentrifiers are not always motivated to move to new neighborhoods to make a quick return on their investment. Scholars have found that many move for a variety of place-specific cultural reasons, including the desire to live alongside people or in neighborhoods they feel are gritty or authentic.⁴⁵ Amenity and lifestyle migrants have also been found to forgo more lucrative career opportunities in cities to emplace themselves in natural-amenity-rich rural areas, places where they perceive the good life and real community to be located.⁴⁶ The cultural environment people believe a place offers can explain why they uproot their lives to move somewhere new, altering the demographic and topographic features of a given community.⁴⁷

How people think and feel about places also has the power to incite civic and political action in local communities after people have moved. People

will pack the halls of neighborhood or city council meetings to fight against zoning changes that might increase the density of their neighborhood to protect its perceived character.⁴⁸ People will take to the streets holding signs and yelling chants to decry a Whole Foods that might replace a local grocer to save commercial establishments they associate with a neighborhood's old-timers.⁴⁹ People will rally together to protest permits for wind turbines to preserve their notions of what rural landscapes should look like.⁵⁰ These actions are not always motivated by a desire to protect property values. People maintain ideas about the character of their neighborhoods and communities and these ideas guide their actions.

Contemporary economic ideologies and structures make the individual-level practices of everyday actors ascendant in communities across the United States. As government funding receded during the 1970s, *neoliberalism* created the conditions in which cities, suburbs, and small towns became increasingly dependent on market-based, private solutions to social problems and community development.⁵¹ Community growth and place-based resources are now largely dependent on political, institutional, and private actors who are motivated to invest in spaces, leading to uneven development within and across these place categories.⁵² The political and economic capital from private interests explains, for instance, why some neighborhoods in cities have updated and well-connected transportation routes and why some do not, or why some rural communities have new medical facilities and others are medical deserts.⁵³ Understanding people's conceptions of places thus provides a piece to the larger puzzle of how and why everyday actors are motivated to participate in local-level community processes that have the power to influence macro-level patterns of social inequality.

However, this book is distinct in its analysis of how second homeowners' and other affluent groups' motivations and actions are typically studied in the context of local places. They are primarily understood only within a singular geography. Gentrifiers are often studied within the neighborhoods they gentrify.⁵⁴ Amenity migrants' influence on local life is mainly contained to the rural localities where they make real estate purchases.⁵⁵ Even second homeowners are typically understood only within the confines of their host communities.⁵⁶ This emphasis on studying a contained geography to understand the influence of affluent people comes from a long line of place-based community scholarship that focuses on geographic propinquity to capture processes of community life—how social ties are formed, how power operates between different social groups, how resources are distributed, how people find a sense of belonging, and how all of this influences people's

everyday institutional and commercial practices.⁵⁷ Researchers have pointed to the more complex ways people divide their associations across city blocks, streets, neighborhoods, and entire metropolitan areas.⁵⁸ However, much research still relies on municipal boundaries to understand how people engage with community life in the twenty-first century.

Such reliance on studying affluent people within municipal boundaries obscures the complexities of the people I talked to. It is not simply that they divided their leisure time and equity between two distinct municipal entities. The people I met also selectively divided their social ties, philanthropy, organizational and institutional involvements, and resources—an entire array of community attachments—between their first- and second-home municipalities in ways that were *patterned* and *relational*. An analysis of their cultural orientations to the places where they lived and owned second homes explained these selective community commitments, providing unique insight into how and why affluent people are implicated in many processes of spatial inequalities at once.

How Place Identity Can Incite Action

There are many different cultural processes that sociologists study to understand how people engage in everyday actions to shape the communities around them. In this book, I explore the pursuit of *place identity*, a specific cultural process of narrative construction that emerged inductively after talking with second homeowners in Rangeley and Boston.⁵⁹ This process explained how the people I talked with understood their place in the world, and how and why they divided their community attachments in ways that contributed to reproducing spatial inequalities across the places where they lived and owned second homes.

Lee Cuba and David Hummon have called the relationship between our personal identity narratives and our geographic location *place identity*, the idea that where we live influences who we are and how we think of ourselves.⁶⁰ Places, or physical locations that we “invest with meaning and value,” are a central feature of identity narrative construction.⁶¹ The “raw materials” we gather over the course of our lives to tell a story about who we are—memories, experiences, understandings, interpretations—are always situated somewhere.⁶² Therefore, physical locations help us situate ourselves as we build the story we tell.⁶³

I build on this concept, *place identity*, in two ways. First, I suggest that place identities can be *felt*. Typically, place identity is conceptualized as a

situated social identity, dependent on one's current geographic location.⁶⁴ This can include identification with a range of geographic types including one's home, neighborhood, community, or even region.⁶⁵ It can also include one's identification with urban, suburban, and rural places.⁶⁶ People call upon their immediate physical environments to tell a story about who they are to others—a city person, a country person, an East Coaster, a West Coaster, a midwesterner, a southerner, and so on and so forth. Yet what is distinct about the people I interviewed is that they use places other than where they live full-time to define themselves, expressing a dissonance between their *felt* place identity and where they permanently reside.

Social theorist Erving Goffman explains *felt identity* as “an individual's subjective sense of [their] own situation and [their] own continuity and character that an individual comes to obtain as a result of [their] various social experiences.”⁶⁷ Felt identity is how we make sense of ourselves and how our everyday experiences coalesce to shape this understanding. It is who we believe we *really* are. The place identities of the people I met had been forged through an accumulation of life experiences and memories that occurred in other types of places, which shaped their subjective understandings of who they were in relation to where they were.

This process is not unique to the people I talked with. Political scientists have written about how people *feel* place identities in ways that shape political behaviors. People who identify as rural, for instance—even if they currently do not live (or have never lived) in a rural place—align themselves with rural affect and values, exhibiting a group “affinity” and voting in ways that align with rural people and places.⁶⁸ Affiliations with rurality and urbanism are powerful forces in signifying identity and orienting our understandings of the social world, regardless of whether we actually live in the place categories with which we identify. This book explores felt identity as an independent variable emergent from a confluence of life experiences that has the power to pattern people's orientations to social life and inform how people engage with the world around them.⁶⁹

Second, I suggest that place identities can be *projects*. A *place-identity project* involves the construction of oneself using place-specific meanings, attributes, and practices, explaining how people both attach their sense of self to certain places and engage in everyday actions to accomplish this aspect of their identity.⁷⁰ In modern life, people do not experience some aspects of identity as ascribed features, given to us at birth. They are *projects*, something to be expertly and continually curated over time in an effort to define ourselves and situate our place in the world.⁷¹ It explains the rise of

self-help books, the popularity of TV show makeovers, and even the trend of personal branding for social media influencers.⁷² This new emphasis on our individuality means we work every day to become who we are and want to be. I explore our relationship to place, *where* we want to be located, as related to this feature of modern life.

Scholars of urban and rural life have been writing about processes akin to place-identity projects for decades.⁷³ For example, Richard Ocejo finds that first-wave gentrifiers on the Lower East Side in New York City develop identities as the symbolic owners of the neighborhood's distinct bars and nightlife and, to protect this sense of self, fight at community meetings against neighborhood upscaling.⁷⁴ Robin Bartram follows building inspectors who come from working-class backgrounds and see themselves as the city's arbiters of justice, using this conception of self to inform their everyday practices—whether they issue an inspection fine, for instance—to make communities more equal for people who have been historically denied housing advantages.⁷⁵ People act on behalf of how they understand who they are in relationship to the places where they live. This not only affirms how people view themselves but also shapes the trajectories of the communities around them.

In this book, I extend this research by specifying the mutually constitutive relationship between place identity and social class.⁷⁶ First, I show how social class influences place identity by shaping the development and enactment of felt place identities and the relative weight and style of place-identity projects. That the people I met are upper-middle-class propels them to remain in affluent communities for access to value-generating resources, even if they would rather be somewhere else. Yet not everyone who has a felt place identity can act on it, and not everyone has equal abilities to make places more like how they imagine them.⁷⁷ I show how the social-class position of the people in this book matters for their ability to turn their felt identity into a project through second homeownership.

It also influences how acute their everyday practices are in their second-home communities. The people I follow in this book may not attend community meetings to fight against upscaling or use their occupational position in a community to advocate for change. Nor can they run for political office or even vote in town or neighborhood municipal meetings to exert their influence in communities, as can permanent residents. However, they have a wealth of social, economic, cultural, and political capital that extends beyond the walls of their high-end real estate investments and even beyond the boundaries of a singular municipality. Their social position enables them

to support local nonprofit institutions that serve as their community representatives, ensuring that the places remain how they imagine them—even in their absence.

Second, I explore how place-identity projects influence social-class position. Affiliation with nature in the country and culture in the city provides the people I met with a presentation of their social-class identity that they find legitimate and secure.⁷⁸ Much has been written about the different discursive methods and everyday practices elites use to justify their social-class position. Rachel Sherman, for instance, writes about the meanings and morality of upper-middle-class lifestyle choices. The elite people she interviewed frame their basic consumption needs as ordinary, even normal, particularly as they are foiled against the ostentation of the superrich. This discourse works as a way for elites to feel morally deserving of what they do and what they have. It is a “site of legitimation.”⁷⁹ Places also operate as this “moral preserve.”⁸⁰ Sociologists like Justin Farrell, Jennifer Sherman, and Michael Bell explore how affiliation with nature and rural people in the country enables some elites to solve their ethical class dilemmas in an age of wealth inequality.⁸¹ I build on this to show how affiliation and engagement with select parts of the country *and* the city can serve as a moral preserve. This affiliation is what Rachel Sherman refers to as a “mode of justification of privilege.”⁸²

To be sure, social class does not operate in isolation. The people I met are predominantly white, which combines with and creates their social-class position in ways that shape their cultural orientations to the city, the country, and the suburbs. As I will explore in each section of the book, their interpretations of these place categories constitute and are constituted by the *racialization of space*, in which different place categories take on socially constructed, symbolic meanings associated with racial categories, which create hierarchical boundaries among and between locations.⁸³ These meanings are historically specific, changing across time and place as larger economic and social forces redraw the boundaries of racial inclusion and exclusion. That parts of the city, the country, and the suburbs are racialized as white spaces is a precondition for any of these places to be considered either a source of institutional advantages or a source of place identity for the white upper-middle-class people I talked with. By connecting this process to the everyday practices of the people I talked to for this book, I make a larger point: by critically examining the origins, limits, and implementation of some upper-middle-class suburbanites’ place-identity projects, we can see how every place is beholden to people like them.

Studying Second Homeownership

THE CASES: RANGELEY AND BOSTON

I first began thinking about second homeownership as a social problem while reading community studies about amenity-rich rural places. I began questioning how the small rural vacation communities that I frequented while growing up in a small city in central Maine have, for decades, grappled with the seasonal influx and exodus of second homeowners—people I often heard referred to pejoratively as “flatlanders” or “from aways.” Second homeowners are intriguing for community scholars because they complicate typical newcomer/old-timer dynamics, place strain on community life, and increase property values for many working-class towns.

I decided to focus this inquiry on Rangeley, a small rural vacation community in northern Maine that I had only visited a handful of times before I began the project. I was intrigued by its long-standing, year-round, highly dense second-home population, drawn to the very remote and isolated corner of western Maine for its abundance of lakes, mountains, and forest. Rangeley is a valuable case for understanding rural second homeownership. Unlike newer and more highly animated second-home communities in the Mountain West that have garnered a great deal of academic attention, the entire state of Maine and northeast region have relied on economic strategies that attract second homeowners since the decline of its agrarian economy throughout the twentieth century.⁸⁴ Today, Rangeley maintains a full-time population of a little over one thousand people and at the time of the research, well over half of the nearly two thousand housing units in Rangeley were occupied by second homeowners. Attention to a place like Rangeley could capture the variability in how second homeowners influence communities and how communities react to their in-migration. Second homeowners are not a new or exogenous force in the region.⁸⁵ They have a long history tied to the town’s development and history.

To study second homeowners in Rangeley, I lived in a one-bedroom apartment on Main Street in Rangeley for nearly a year between 2013 and 2014. I conducted in-depth interviews with thirty-seven second homeowners whom I met through permanent residents I came to know well, through the jobs I worked, and through other second homeowners. For the interviews, many invited me to their second homes, where we often spent all morning or afternoon together, allowing me to see part of their world from their point of view. Most of the participants in my sample worked in professional or managerial positions, had a bachelor’s degree or higher, lived permanently in suburbs or

exurbs in New England or Florida (which mirrored the primary residences of most second homeowners in Rangeley), and were politically heterogeneous.⁸⁶ The average estimated value for their second home in 2021 was \$490,187, compared to Rangeley's median home value of \$234,400 (see table 1).⁸⁷ The estimated value of their permanent residence was \$731,240. All second homeowners in my interview sample were white. Drawing from their education levels and occupations, the second homeowners I met in Rangeley were part of the upper middle class.⁸⁸ Their collective housing assets also necessarily place them in a category above the middle class.⁸⁹

I also observed nearly every facet of local life where second homeowners might appear: municipal meetings, church events, sporting associations, nonprofit organizations, coffee shops, bars, bakeries, restaurants, museums, bookstores, and community events—fairs, farmer's markets, parades, festivals, lectures, home tours, municipal events, and so on. I held two local jobs while completing fieldwork, working alongside permanent residents and observing their interactions with second homeowners as they occurred (or did not) in everyday life. During the winter I worked at the local recreational mountain, and during the summer I was a server at a restaurant in town. Additionally, I analyzed an array of community documents including newspaper articles, historical texts, municipal records, property tax records, donation databases, and community forums.

Because I am simultaneously a "Mainer" and an out-of-stater, although I do not identify as a local Rangeley resident nor as a second homeowner, I was able to traverse and gain *entrée* with both diverse groups in town. Aspects of my personal history, such as identifying as a "Mainer," coming from a family of farmers and steelworkers, and having a working knowledge of all of the primary outdoor recreation activities found in this area (including skiing, snowboarding, fishing, hiking, hunting, four-wheeling, and snowmobiling), gave me almost immediate *entrée* with permanent residents, and working at the mountain and at the restaurant helped me build rapport, despite not being from Rangeley myself. On the other hand, my educational background coupled with living in a large urban area outside of Maine for graduate school enabled me to build rapport with second homeowners who were not from Maine.

As this project unfolded, I considered another important lesson I learned reading about community life: there is a recursive relationship between urban and rural people and places.⁹⁰ I began considering what draws people to second homeownership in cities and how, if at all, these processes are similar to patterns in rural parts of the country. The rise of

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second homeownership in cities is a relatively recent phenomenon, and is most common in highly affluent neighborhoods in global cities.

Boston is a constructive case for understanding urban second homeownership. Although it is a smaller global city, the rise of second homeownership there mirrors the rise in larger cities, as well as in cities of the same size across the United States.⁹¹ Despite making up only a small fraction of the total housing stock in Boston, second homeownership concentrates in core parts of the city, much like it does in larger cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Today, Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Downtown, North End/Waterfront—central-city neighborhoods that have been on the front lines of the city’s revitalization efforts and are in stages of super-gentrification today—contain the highest density of second homeowners in Boston.⁹² In neighborhoods like Back Bay and Downtown, second homeownership has risen from less than 2 percent of the total housing stock to just over 10 percent over a thirty-year period from 1990 to 2019.⁹³ While still not a huge portion, many of these second-home units are concentrated in clusters of buildings within these neighborhoods.⁹⁴ These patterns suggest that the rise of second homeownership has occurred in conjunction with Boston’s increased affluence and exclusivity in the central part of the city.

However, deciphering who exactly these owners are is methodologically challenging. Tax records in Boston collect information on who receives the permanent residency tax exemption, but they do not collect information on the intended use of the non-residents’ units. It is thus difficult to distinguish units via the Boston tax records between owners who use the property for vacation or leisure, investment, or as a rental unit to tenants or via third-party platforms. There is great variety in who potentially owns these units. Some are exclusively Airbnb owners, some are international wealth elites who use urban real estate as a safe-deposit box, some own a place to be near their children attending college, others are like the second homeowners I talked to for this book, and still others are a combination of these categories. The people I follow in this book are thus one segment of this increasing population.⁹⁵

In Boston, I completed this research between 2014 and 2016 while I lived in Jamaica Plain. I interviewed twenty-four second homeowners. Because of their highly transient lifestyles, the second homeowners I interviewed in Boston were much harder to talk to in person than the people I met in Rangeley. Most would spend a few days a month in their second homes, and many could not be sure about when that might be. Because of this, I spoke with almost all of them over the phone, often from long distances, because they could not guarantee their availability at a specific time to meet me in

person. I relied on them to describe their daily activities and the details of their second homes to me. After our conversations, I spent time walking through their neighborhoods to get a sense of the daily routines and practices they relayed. Yet these very methodological problems, I learned, helped me better understand their transient, anonymous, and limited orientation to city life, a theme that weaves throughout the book.⁹⁶ My educational position at a well-known university in the Boston area helped me gain entrée with the highly educated second homeowners in Boston I met, many of whom went to college in Boston themselves.

Nearly all of the second homeowners in my sample owned a second home in central-city neighborhoods, except for two who owned second homes in Jamaica Plain. On average, second homeowners from Boston had more wealth in housing than the second homeowners I met in Rangeley. The average value of their second home as of 2021 was \$897,030 compared to Boston's median home value \$532,700.⁹⁷ The average estimated value of their first home was \$1,228,290. Most held professional or executive occupations. Many were doctors, lawyers, professors, or CEOs and CFOs of small to midsized corporations. Almost all had a graduate degree. All but one identified as white and were American-born. About half lived permanently in the suburbs or exurbs of Boston and the other half lived in the suburbs of other cities across the United States. Like in Rangeley, they were politically heterogeneous. Drawing from their housing assets, occupations, and education levels, the people I met in Boston sat slightly higher in the upper-middle-class socioeconomic category than the people I interviewed in Rangeley.

In Rangeley, I was immersed in the world of permanent residents and second homeowners, watching how they interacted with each other (or did not) in everyday life. I saw them riding ski lifts together, discussing the best berries to buy at the farmer's market, and, at times, ignoring each other. Yet one cannot see second homeowners in Boston in the same way as one can in Rangeley. Because of the sheer density and anonymity of city life, one is unlikely to know if one passes them on the street or bumps into them at the coffee shop. I knew this going into my project. To then capture a portrait of how certain neighborhoods in Boston understand second homeowners (or do not), I relied on a sampling of different sources of data. I interviewed six community leaders and five real estate agents. I also interviewed an employee at the Boston Symphony Orchestra and an employee from the Boston tax assessor's office. I analyzed an array of community documents, including newspaper articles, tax records, donation databases, community forums, and archival data. I attended ten community meetings in neighborhoods where second homeowners most

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TABLE 1. Demographic Characteristics of Sample in Rangeley and Boston

	Rangeley	Boston
Race	all white	predominantly white
Age range	40s–80s	40s–80s
Occupation	managerial and professional	professional and executive
Education	majority BA or higher	majority graduate degree
Mean est. second-home value ¹	\$490,187	\$897,030
Range est. second-home value	\$180,000–\$1,490,000	\$361,700–\$2,823,000
Mean est. first-home value	\$731,240	\$1,228,290
Range est. first-home value	\$288,345–\$1,618,894	\$200,800–\$2,661,210

¹ Home values are derived from July 2021 Zillow Estimates (Zestimates July 2021). These might be higher than typical because of pandemic-induced real estate inflation. However, Zestimates are often the best proxy, as tax assessment is typically much lower than “real” value in marketplace. Not all Rangeley homes have Zestimates. In instances in which they did not, I used comparable homes located on the same roads with similar characteristics (waterfront, square footage, bedrooms/baths, etc.).

heavily concentrate in Boston: the North End/Waterfront, Back Bay, and Downtown. This allowed me to measure the presence and/or absence of second homeowners in Boston’s civic sphere and to chart their reception by civic leaders and community stakeholders.

It was this comparison that I set out to explore. I wanted to understand the linkages between urban and rural second homeownership and how affluent people affect these two geographies. However, as my interviews unfolded, I noticed a recurring pattern in how they talked about their second homes: it was always relational with their primary residences. So as my interviews went on, I continued to ask more questions about this relationality. I learned that to fully understand the people I met and their multifaceted influence across local life, I not only had to understand their relationships to their second-home host communities; I also had to understand their social-class position in relation to their hometowns.

THE PEOPLE: UPPER-MIDDLE-CLASS AND MOSTLY SUBURBAN

In my research design, I did not originally set out to study people who were predominantly upper-middle-class and primarily from the suburbs. However, I learned after talking with second homeowners from Rangeley and

Boston that both categories were important for understanding their motivations for and practices associated with second homeownership.

At first glance, this particular group of upper-middle-class people who buy second homes in the city or the country and live permanently in suburban communities may seem unique or niche, especially after years of accounts in major news platforms that focus on international wealth elites who buy real estate as a safe-deposit box in places like the Time Warner Center in Manhattan or jet-setting urbanites who purchase million-dollar views in resort towns like Jackson Hole, Wyoming, or Aspen, Colorado.⁹⁸

However, many second homeowners today are upper-middle-class, a category I use as a heuristic to talk about people who are neither in the middle class nor in the top 1 percent.⁹⁹ Upper-middle-class people typically work in upper management or professional occupations, or are small-business owners, they often have a college degree and sometimes a graduate or professional degree, and they make between \$150,000 and \$500,000 annually. While other demographic data are difficult to obtain for second homeowners, a Zillow analysis of data from the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act in 2019 found that the median income of a second-home buyer with a mortgage was \$170,000, and most of these buyers were white, aligning with the broad category of upper middle class.¹⁰⁰

Upper-middle-class people are an increasingly important subset of elites to study. Shamus Kahn has suggested that elites are people who “[occupy] a position that provides them with access and control or as [those who possess] resources that advantage them.”¹⁰¹ This definition encourages us to look at the heterogeneity of elites, not just those who sit at the top of the socioeconomic hierarchy, to understand the multiple and complex methods by which people maintain control or access to resources in ways that have “transferable value” and disadvantage others.¹⁰² Scholars like Lauren Riviera and Rachel Sherman have built on this by studying the top 20 percent of income earners who hide in the shadows of the hyper-affluent. This social location beneath the top 1 percent enables upper-middle-class people to obscure, minimize, and justify the privileges they secure—inherited wealth, access to quality schools, and robust social capital, to name just a few.¹⁰³

Whereas many accounts of second homeowners follow city dwellers to the countryside or international global jet-setters across city real estate, the vast majority of the people I talked with were from suburban communities.¹⁰⁴ This aligns with recent research that suggests that the majority of second homeowners in New England are, in fact, from the suburbs.¹⁰⁵ If we consider that many second homeowners are upper-middle-class, it should be

no surprise that most of those who spoke with me lived permanently in the suburbs and other highly affluent communities because this is where many upper-middle-class people reproduce their social position.¹⁰⁶

It is important to note, however, that there is no uniform measure that exists to define “suburban.”¹⁰⁷ In fact, it is a contested category that can encompass everything from geographic location, transportation, planning type, to culture.¹⁰⁸ Geographically, nearly everyone I spoke with lived in an incorporated municipality in proximity to a small or large city. Whether it was a small city or a small town, most talked about their permanent residence in relation to larger or smaller metropolitan areas nearby, with the vast majority describing their hometown as “outside/north/south/near X city.” These interpretive and geographic definitions closely align with contemporary efforts to define *suburban* (table 2).¹⁰⁹

What unites all the places where my respondents lived is that these types of communities have benefited from America’s system of metropolitan division—the incorporation of small towns and cities that are within a metropolitan area but beyond the urban core—that allocates many public services based on the local tax base from this small geographic unit.¹¹⁰ Nearly uniformly, they lived in predominantly white communities where the average median household income was higher than the median household income for the state in which they live.¹¹¹ Within these communities, they lived in large homes and maintained access to top-quality schools, health-care facilities, job opportunities, and public services. To put it simply, they lived in highly affluent and resource-rich municipalities.

Highly affluent suburban communities have received sustained attention over the course of nearly a century for the ways in which residents within them secure their resources at the expense of other people and places.¹¹² It is where wealth has been created and inherited through federal programs that provided many white suburban residents with access to home mortgages. It is where zoning restrictions limiting density have continued to make access to these communities a scarce resource.¹¹³ It is where resource-rich schools concentrated after the white middle-class exodus from the cities during the era of school desegregation.¹¹⁴ And it is where many affluent people continue to develop social capital through ties with each other that sustain these very locational advantages.¹¹⁵ That the second homeowners I met were predominantly upper-middle-class and suburban is an important theme in this book. This unique social location informed their orientations to the places where they lived and owned second homes, connecting the relationship between place and privilege.

TABLE 2. Second Homeowners' Permanent Residences in Sample by Household

Permanent residence type	Urban second homeowners	Rural second homeowners	Total
Urban	5	3	8
Suburban	18	14	32
Rural	1	5	6
Total	24	22	46

Organization of the Book

Part 1 takes readers to the suburbs, the places where the vast majority of the people I met called home. In these chapters, I explore the origins of their dissatisfaction with their hometowns and explain why these people, who were from the same social class and who lived in the same types of places, experienced them in entirely different ways—either as too urban or too rural. But more than that, these chapters answer fundamental questions. If they did not like the places where they lived, why did they move there in the first place? And why did they stay? In answering these questions, the chapters chart how their relationship to their first home contributed to deepening spatial inequalities between the suburbs and the city and the country.

In Part 2 and Part 3, we travel to Rangeley and Boston, respectively. In these chapters, I explore the place-identity projects of the people I met, how their sense of place guided their everyday actions, how this matched up with Rangeley's and Boston's own place-making projects, and how their place-identity projects relied on and further contributed to deepening enduring inequalities within the city and the country. At the end of each section, I explore how local folks thought about and reacted to second homeowners' presence or absence in community life.

In the conclusion, I discuss the theoretical and empirical contributions of the book—how studying this process can help us understand affluent people's relationship to community, the ways in which privilege lies at the heart of the relationship between place and identity, and how to approach policies made about second homeowner in-migration.

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