Young adults in rural tourism areas

av

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Akademisk avhandling

Avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i kulturgeografi,
som kommer att försvaras offentligt
fredagen den 27:e maj 2016 kl. 13.00,
Clas Ohlson-salen, Högskolan Dalarna

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Abstract

Peter Möller (2016), Young adults in rural tourism areas. Örebro Studies in Human Geography 10.

This thesis examines how tourism affects conditions for young adults in rural areas. Such a study lies at the intersection of research about tourism impacts, adult transition, and rural areas. The aim is to examine how large-scale tourism affects the opportunities for young adults living in rural areas; their perception of place and the perceived opportunities and obstacles that tourism provides.

The thesis utilizes a mixed method approach. A quantitative study based on micro-data on individuals identifies the patterns and magnitudes of the mechanisms by which tourism affects population change among young adults. Interview methods are used in the case study area, Sälen, to investigate these mechanisms in depth. Finally, the rural–urban dichotomy is explored in a conceptual study that asks how tourism affects the perception of a local village as either rural or urban. Young inhabitants in rural areas are rarely considered in tourism research; therefore, the main contribution of this thesis is that it illuminates how tourism affects conditions for young adults in rural areas.

The thesis reveals a substantial impact on the adult transition, mainly due to easier access to the labor market and a good supply of jobs during the high season. Further, the large number of people passing through creates flows of opportunities to make friends, get a job, or just meet people. All of these factors contribute to high mobility in these places, and to the perception of them as places where things happen. The high mobility in Sälen implies that fixed migrant categories (such as stayers and leavers) are largely insufficient. The tourism environment creates a space that is always under construction and continually producing new social relations mainly perceived as opportunities. Conceptualizing this as a modern rurality is a way to move beyond the often implicit notions of urban as modern and rural as traditional.

Keywords: young adults, adult transition, tourism, rural areas, Sälen, telephone interviews, register study, life history interviews, population change, mobility.

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