

Young adults' perceptions of and affective bonds to a rural tourism community

PETER MÖLLER



Möller, Peter (2016). Young adults' perceptions of and affective bonds to a rural tourism community. *Fennia* 194: 1, pp. 32–45. ISSN 1798-5617.

Many rural areas, in Sweden and worldwide, experience population decline where the young leave for education and work in urban areas. Employment has declined in several rural industries, such as agriculture, forestry, and fishing, while growing in other industries are often located in urban areas. Politicians and organizations have put much hope in tourism as a tool of rural development, but can tourism help reverse the rural out-migration trend among young adults? This paper explores how tourism affects young inhabitants' perceptions of and affective bonds to a rural area in Sweden, the ski resort of Sälen. Students from the 1993–1995 elementary school graduating classes were interviewed about their migration history, childhood, and view of and ties to Sälen. The respondents experience that tourism contributes to a more vital community incorporating influences from elsewhere, but without eliminating the positive aspects of rural life. The regular flow of people – tourists, seasonal workers, and entrepreneurs – passing through Sälen presents opportunities to extend one's social network that are widely appreciated by respondents. The high in and out mobility constitutes a key part of Sälen's character. Contributions from tourism – such as employment, entertainment, leisure, and opportunities to forge new social relationships – are available during the adult transition, the life phase when rural areas are often perceived as least attractive. Even though out-migration occurs in Sälen, and some respondents still find Sälen too small, tourism has clearly increased the available opportunities and contributed significantly to making Sälen more attractive to young adults.

Keywords: young adults, tourism, rural development, out-migration

Peter Möller, School of Technology and Business Studies, Dalarna University, 791 88 Falun, Sweden. E-mail: pmo@du.se

Introduction

Regardless of when and where migration is examined, the highest proportion of migration occurs during the transition from youth to adulthood. Over the last century, the migration peak has been delayed from early adolescence to the early twenties, due to prolonged education and higher life expectancy (Boyle et al. 1998: 111). Many rural areas around the world are experiencing decreasing populations, as the young and educated are leaving rurality behind. Employment has been declining in many rural industries, such as agricul-

ture, forestry, and fishing, while growing industries are located in urban areas. The impacts of the rural decline have not been evenly distributed geographically, with peripheral areas often experiencing more dramatic declines (Hall et al. 2009).

Politicians and organizations have put much hope in tourism as a tool for rural development. Growing global tourism is an effective source of income and employment and in some cases one of few available options, explaining why tourism attracts so much attention in rural politics and planning (Sharpley 2002: 12). However, the hope for tourism as a tool for development is not undis-

puted. Tourism employment is often seasonal, low in status, and low paid, raising questions about whether it can provide adequate livelihoods (Mihalič 2002: 104). Other reported obstacles are economic leakages from the tourism area, the uneven distribution of revenues, and the risk of mono-development in one industry (Mihalič 2002: 98). Extensive research examines the social and economic impacts of tourism on communities. Tourism-impact research has also identified several issues significant in the adult transition, primarily related to employment and social opportunities. However, the effects of tourism on the attractiveness of these communities to young adult inhabitants are less examined. Altogether these relations are keys to the understanding of population dynamics in rural areas dominated by tourism.

Möller (2012) examined the conditions for adult transition in the Swedish ski resort Sälen by interviewing thirteen young adult inhabitants. A key conclusion was that tourism areas may offer a dynamic environment for young adults providing, for example, good opportunities to extend their social network, good opportunities to get a job/start a business, and a generally smooth entry into the labour market. The positive effects were most significant early in the adult transition, while the last step into adulthood was described as difficult. This paper builds on Möller's (2012) findings by extending the analysis to migrants and return migrants in addition to the stayers. The aim of this paper is to examine the influence of tourism in Sälen on young adults' perceptions of and affective bonds to Sälen. The paper sets out to explore the following questions:

- 1) How does tourism affect the young inhabitants' perceptions of the opportunities to remain in or return to Sälen?
- 2) How does tourism affect the young inhabitants' social relationships in Sälen?
- 3) How does tourism affect the young inhabitants' relationship to mobility?

The research questions have been examined with a special interest in the respondents' migration history, both the decision to stay, leave or return to Sälen, but also different types of migration decisions within these three main categories. The paper is organized as follows. The next section presents previous research relevant to questions addressed in this study. A brief description of Sälen, the area of interest in this paper is followed by the research design of the study. In the next

three sections, the empirical results are presented. The paper closes with a concluding discussion.

Young adults in rural tourism communities

The out-migration of young adults from rural areas is a global migration trend over the last century. Several studies in various disciplines have identified the scarcity of jobs and services as major drivers, but also limited educational opportunities (Crockett et al. 2000), poor public transport (e.g. Furlong & Cooney 1990; Wallace & Boyle 1993; Cloke et al. 1997) and a general lack of opportunities (Rye 2006) are some of the most reported shortcomings of these rural areas. A counter-urbanisation trend has been seen in several countries (e.g., Champion 1989; Mitchell 2004; Halfacree 2008), but the impact in Sweden is small and mostly present in the countryside close to metropolitan areas (Magnusson Turner 2013). Even though there are also more positive perceptions of the rural life among young people reported – e.g. an appreciation of nature, that everyone cares for each other, solidarity (Rye 2006), low crime (Francis 1999) – these often concerns the childhood while the countryside seems less attractive for teenagers and young adults (Glendinning et al. 2003). However, there is also research that provides a more complex picture in which identity and social relations as well as place attachment/detachment are identified as important for the decisions of young adults to stay or move. Stockdale (2002) examined the importance of ties to family or friends when young people make their migration decisions. Family and social networks proved to be important when young people out-migrated, often to places where they had relatives, friends, or friends of friends. The importance of these social ties declined with time after the first move, resulting in less frequent visits to the home area. However, that could change in a later stage of life, for example, if their parents become ill or to take their children to visit their grandparents. Jamieson (2000: 211) developed the analysis of migration decisions by defining both stayers and migrants as attached to or detached from the place where they went to elementary school. Respondents who felt attached to or detached from the place of their schooldays were found among both migrants and stayers. Regardless of attachment to a place and migration deci-

sion, Jamieson (2000: 217–218) concludes that “the levelling of urban/rural difference has not wholly erased the denigration of rural places as traditional backwaters where nothing much happens”; both stayers and migrants averred that “those with finer qualities normally get out, leaving behind those stuck in their narrow mind set”. Similar findings have been reported in research in a Swedish context (Svensson 2006; Kåks 2007).

Tourism is often seen as a vehicle for development in rural areas, first and foremost by contributing with desired jobs, but research has also revealed other both positive impacts – e.g. local business opportunities, investment in services and infrastructure, an increased standard of living, improved quality of life, entertainment and recreational opportunities, opportunities to socialize, and general economic growth – and negative impacts such as higher prices and costs of living, insecure or low-paid employment, and congestion in stores, services, and traffic. Communities with large-scale tourism are often characterised by a high degree of mobility, with large flows of tourists, and in some communities with large flows of temporary workers as well. Lundmark (2006) showed in her study on temporary labour mobility and permanent migration that the local labour supply was not enough to fill all seasonal vacancies in tourism, and that mostly young people from southern Sweden are filling those vacancies in the southern mountain range of Sweden. When analysing Malung-Sälen and Åre, two municipalities with large-scale winter tourism resorts, it occurred that a few of the seasonal workers moved to these municipalities permanently, and as few as 6–8% of them still remained there nine years after the immigration, pointing to the high degree of mobility in those areas. The young adult respondents in Möller’s study (2012) described Sälen in similar terms, as a place where a lot of people are passing by and where a lot of relations are created, mostly casual but sometimes more longstanding.

Doreen Massey’s analytical approach to space as constituted of flows may be fruitful as a basis for understanding these relations. Massey argues (2005: 9) for a perspective on space as the product of interrelations; thus we must recognize space as “constituted through interactions”, which means that space is always under construction, and never finished. Even though more people are travelling more frequently and for longer distances, and that communication has increased significantly in recent decades, “different social groups, and differ-

ent individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections” (Massey 1994: 149). Furthermore, Massey emphasizes that space is a sphere of coexisting multiple trajectories. The flows of possibilities in Sälen, described by Möller (2012), are strongly related to what Massey (2005: 111) defined as *the chance of space* where “otherwise unconnected narratives may be brought into contact, or previously connected ones may be wrenched apart”.

Massey’s definition of space, as something unfinished, where multiple trajectories are co-existing, is very obvious during high season in Sälen; in the flows of tourists focused on getting the most out of their skiing for a weekend or week which they have paid fairly much money for, and the flows of seasonal workers that spend at least a few months in Sälen, but still have limited interests in the local community (Engström 2011). But even though most of the tourists and seasonal workers are not there to make new friends among the locals or engage in any other way in the local community, they constitute *the chance of space* (Massey 2005). One key finding of Möller’s (2012) study of adult transition in the Swedish skiing resort area of Sälen is the opportunities to make new friends, generate job contacts, or simply to meet new people. To better understand how these co-existing multiple trajectories can contribute to the local community, Granovetter’s (1973, 1983) theory of social ties, which emphasizes the importance of weak social ties, is useful. The difference between strong and weak social ties is not well defined by Granovetter, but a somewhat vague description of strong ties is that they encompass family and close friends, while weak ties comprise more than ‘negligible’ interactions (but not family or close friends). Although strong social ties are important, they are limited in that their very nature makes it impossible to sustain a large number of them. To be important for the diffusion of influence, information, mobility opportunities, and community organization, weak social ties must link different groups of close friends. Granovetter cites the example of a rumour that spreads between close friends, who will probably hear the rumour two or more times; the same rumour spreading via weak ties will travel between different groups of close friends, and therefore be more widely disseminated. Personal relations are more effective than other means of mass communication because people don’t act on information solely from mass-media unless they also receive it through personal ties (Granovetter 1973).

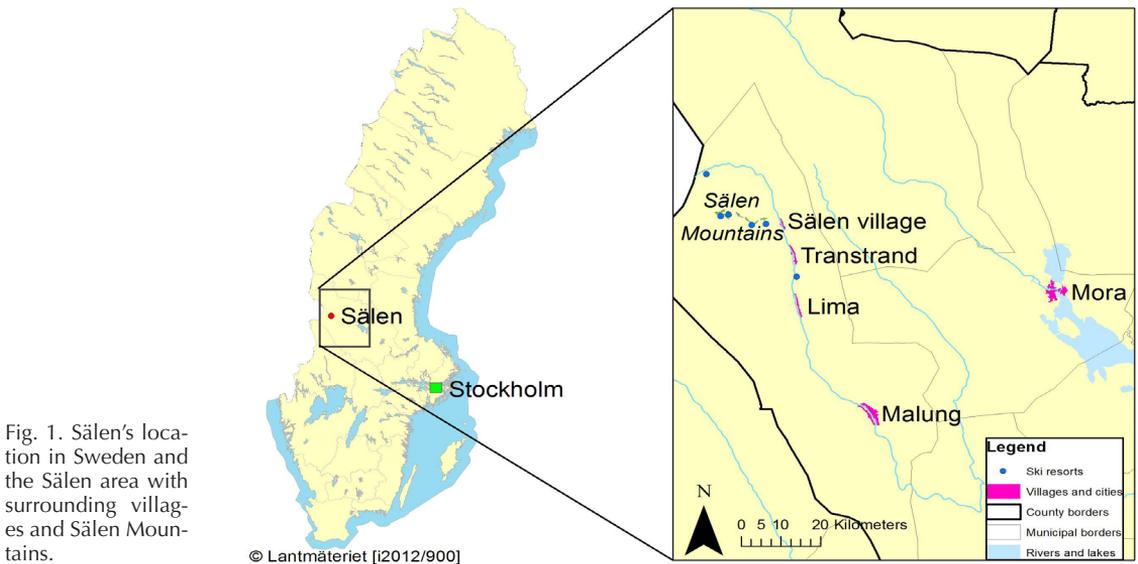


Fig. 1. Sälen's location in Sweden and the Sälen area with surrounding villages and Sälen Mountains.

The Sälen area

The Sälen area is defined as comprising the villages of Sälen, Lima, and Rörbäcksnäs with the surrounding countryside and the Sälen Mountains (Fig. 1). The area is located in Dalarna County in Sweden, a roughly five-hour car journey from Stockholm. Six ski resorts are located in the area: four in the Sälen Mountains, one in the valley between the Sälen and Lima villages, and one near the Norwegian border. Taking all these ski resorts together, this ski resort area is one of the biggest in Sweden in terms of turnover. The tourism industry originated in the late 1950s and has, except during Sweden's economic crisis in the 1990s, developed substantially and fairly continuously since then. The inhabitants generally describe the area as completely dependent on tourism (Möller 2012), and Bodén and Rosenberg (2004) measured the tourism industry's share of Sälen's total employment to be 72%. The skiing season runs between December and April, peaking during a few holiday weeks in February and around Easter. Approximately 1700 permanent inhabitants live in Sälen and the surrounding villages (Bodén & Rosenberg 2004), plus almost 2000 seasonal workers each season and more than an estimated 50,000 tourists per week in peak season (Sweco Viak AB 2008).

Research design

This study is based on a telephone interview study where all students from the 1993–1995 graduation classes of the elementary school in Lima village, which all 15-year-old inhabitants of the Sälen area attend, are included. These graduation classes were chosen because most of these respondents were expected to have recently passed their young adult ages and established themselves as adults. Due to the comprehensive population register in Sweden, as many as 95 of the 116 students were found in the public records. There are three possible reasons to why these 21 'missing' individuals may be absent in the register; 1) they have emigrated, 2) they have got a protected identity, or 3) they are deceased. It is not possible to make a drop-out analysis since they cannot be contacted, but the examined population in this study is in the same age and have at least one location of living in common, Sälen in ninth grade, which does not raise any concerns that they would have given considerably different responses.

In a structured part of the interview, the respondents answered questions on the choices they had made; where they had lived, the most important reason for migration (if occurred), their parents' place of origin, if they had friends and family in Sälen by the time of the interview, earlier and/or

continued relations to tourists or employees within the tourism industry. In a semi-structured part of the interview, questions were relatively open to explore their experiences; their childhood in the area and their past and present relations to people in the tourism industry. The respondents also had the opportunity to comment some of the structured questions. The structured part of the interview allows for an analysis of proportions regarding different phenomena among the respondents. Taken together, this provided key information on the respondents' experiences of Sälen and some of the reasons to their migrant decisions. Some respondents took the opportunity to elaborate their views and thoughts in these questions, but the limited time and lack of face-to-face communication distinguish these interviews from in-depth interviews.

One week before the phone calls were made, an introductory letter was sent to the respondents informing them about the research project. Of the 95 former students located, 67 were interviewed, constituting a response rate of approximately 70%. Five declined to participate in the study, seven agreed to be interviewed but did not manage to find time for it during the interview period, and 16 did not answer the phone. On average, ten attempts to reach those who were not interviewed were made on different days at various times of day.

Most interviews were approximately 10–15 minutes in length. The interviews were conducted in Swedish, and passages from them quoted in the text were translated into English by the author. The respondents are anonymized when referred to or quoted from the interview notes.

Three categories of respondents can be identified, based on their migration history (Table 1).

The categories were based on the respondents' migrant decision to make it possible to examine if this is related to their place perception and attachment to Sälen. It is reasonable to expect some differences in the views of and relationships to Sälen between individuals who have chosen to stay there, out-migrate and not return, and out-migrate and later return. Therefore, these categories have been used when analysing the interviews, and the sub-categories have been used to analyse differences within the main categories. The back-and-forth categories (of both migrants and return migrants) are of special interest when relating to the results of Möller's (2012) study of adult transition in Sälen. The uncertainty during the adult transition has increased in recent decades where young people in several European countries face difficulties to find jobs. Many of the employments they get are fixed-term contracts, part time or irregular work hours (Blossfeld et al. 2005). This is a period

Table 1. The migration categories and sub-categories of the respondents in the study.

Category	Sub-category	Description
Stayers	All-time	Have lived in the Sälen area all the time
	Education	Have lived in the Sälen area all the time, except for 2–3 years of education elsewhere
Migrants	One move	Out-migrated – made one move
	Several moves	Out-migrated – made several moves but never to the Sälen area again
	Back-and-forth	Out-migrated – several moves and at least one to the Sälen area
Return migrants	Back-and-forth	Out-migrated – have returned to Sälen several times and now live in the Sälen area
	One return move	Out-migrated – returned (once) to and now live in the Sälen area

of insecurity for many young adults, a period when they alternate between dependency and autonomy. Biggart and Walther (2006) used the term "yo-yo transition" to describe this period when young people live youthful and adult lives simultaneously. Möller (2012) concluded that young adults experienced relatively secure adult transitions in the Sälen context due to the opportunities to return to Sälen if they wished, knowing that the area provided easy access to jobs in the high season. One respondent expressed difficulties leaving Sälen because "there is always someone calling, wanting you to work for them".

The three graduating classes comprise equal proportions of men and women, the same as among the respondents in this study, so no gender bias existed in the drop-outs. A slight majority of respondents lives in Sälen.

The respondents' experience of and affective bonds to Sälen have been interpreted by analysing the respondents' descriptions of their childhoods and of the place, how rooted they are in Sälen, and how they describe the tourism industry in Sälen. Rootedness is here defined by the parents' origin and whether the respondents still had family and friends living in the area at the time of the interviews.

The 67 respondents were almost equally divided between those who lived in the Sälen area and those who did not during the interview period. Of

those who lived in Sälen, half had lived there since finishing elementary school – for some, with the exception of two to three years of education elsewhere – and half had out-migrated and later returned to the area (Fig. 2). Ten of the respondents lived in Stockholm at the time of the interview, another ten lived in cities with over 10,000 inhabitants (but not in one of Sweden's three metropolitan areas), and the other 47 lived in smaller cities or in the countryside (e.g. the Sälen area).

Men are relatively evenly distributed in the three main migrant categories, whereas a clear majority of the women are migrants. The female stayers and return migrants are thus about half as many as in the corresponding male categories. The biggest difference between sexes is found in the sub-category *Migrants – one move*, where women account for nearly three quarters.

Respondent perceptions of and affective bonds to Sälen

The 67 respondents have described how they experience Sälen and the influence from tourism. One open-ended question in the interview, concerning the respondents' childhood and youth in Sälen, generated a wide range of answers. Most

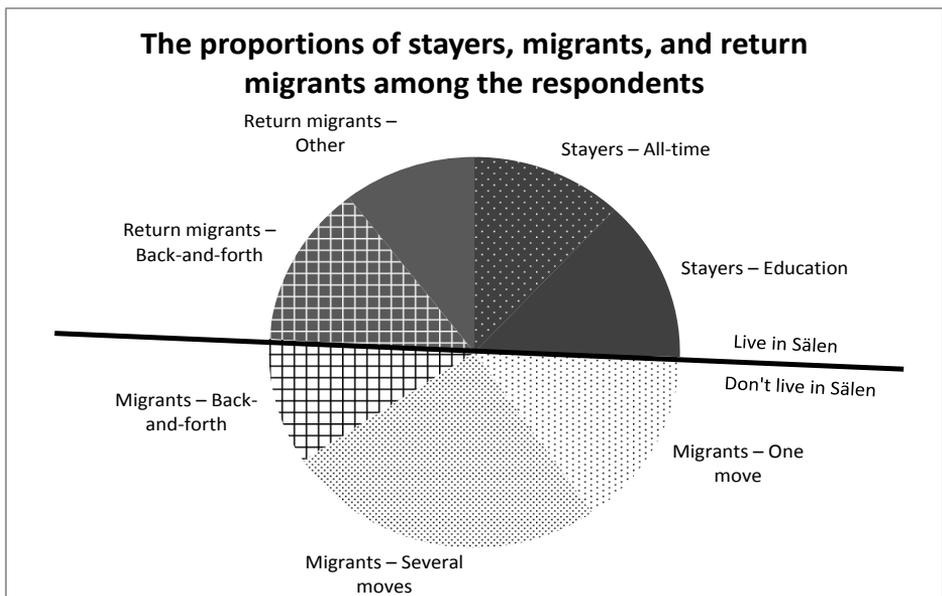


Fig. 2. Migrant categories among the respondents.

respondents in all three migrant categories expressed predominately positive feelings towards their childhood and youth in Sälen. The return migrants' descriptions were not as positive as those of migrants in the other categories, and they described their childhood and youth in slightly more negative terms than did the stayers, which may indicate a greater ambiguity towards Sälen. Some of the migrants and return migrants described having a good childhood but a worse adolescence, recalling what has been described as "the rural dull" in previous studies (Skelton 2000; Berg & Lysgård 2001; Rye 2006). The period of rural dullness seems to have been the most significant in the years before respondents came of age, at age 18. One migrant described the effects of tourism on Sälen, and said that he

"experienced what it was like when a small village turned into a city, in just over a month, with all the tourists and the development. There was considerable annoyance over queuing to buy a carton of milk, especially since you can just run in and out doing that in summer. But it was a lot of fun as well, especially with the vibrant nightlife when you turned 18".

The access to a relatively broad range of services and entertainment in the years after 18, the years when most rural youth out-migration occurs, was mentioned by several respondents as something positive which indicates its contribution to alleviating rural dullness in Sälen at these ages. Another theme mentioned by several respondents is the positive development of Sälen in both economic and social terms. The economic perspective concerns job and business opportunities as important effects of tourism, and many respondents emphasized that tourism was the most important reason for Sälen's existence – at least as anything other than a small depopulated village. A return migrant said that "without [tourism] Sälen would not exist. There would be no jobs, so [tourism] means a lot. It's our livelihood". A migrant discussed what could make him return to Sälen, and mentioned "proximity to where things happen, to live in a place with positive thinking, entrepreneurial spirit, and development. There is so much of that in Sälen, so I feel increasingly interested in returning".

Even though Sälen was described as an occasionally vibrant peripheral village because of the tourism, the respondents described many rural features as well, features that have also been reported in previous rural research. An appreciation of na-

ture was expressed by several respondents, often associated with hunting, fishing, and outdoor life in general, or just access to the vast surroundings of forests and mountains. A safe and close-knit community was another theme mentioned by several respondents. A return migrant expressed appreciation of

"having grown up near nature. It provides a sense of security, a fixed point. Growing up in a nice environment – I liked that. I have spent a lot of time in big cities and there's nothing there that attracts me. It's nice for a weekend or so, but then I want to return to Sälen".

The close-knit community, where everyone knows each other, was not described only in positive terms, and the difference between the migrant categories regarding this matter is not clear. One migrant described the close-knit community as: "so small, and everyone knows each other. Maybe that is a reason I moved, to see something else, some new people". In contrast, another migrant discussed the same theme but from the opposite perspective: "Today, when I live in a big city, I feel that I miss knowing people and saying 'hi' to my neighbours. It is very special when everyone knows each other". The safe close-knit community was described as a good environment specifically for children, and one return migrant described her return as motivated by a desire "to give my children the same childhood opportunities that I had". Another rural feature frequently mentioned by respondents in all three migrant categories is the peaceful and quiet environment of Sälen: "It is calm and quiet, but in winter you have proximity to the mountains, which is like a small town [with all the tourists in high season]. Then you have huge opportunities for ... outdoor life. Endless opportunities in the surroundings". This quotation exemplifies how Sälen is described by the respondents: as a rural area with rural features but where tourism adds complementary features. Tourism is not said to eliminate the rural features, which are still greatly present. What is described by the respondents could be defined as a mixed landscape where both rural and urban influences are apparent. This mixed landscape is not static but changes with the tourism seasons and differs between precise geographical locations in the Sälen area.

One dimension of the affective bond to a place is the individual's history connected to the place and roots in the place. In this study, this has been

	Parents originating from Sälen			Family in Sälen	Friends
	None	One	Two		
Loose	x			no	no
	x			no	yes
Medium	x			yes	yes
		x		yes	no
		x		no	yes
Strong		x		yes	yes
			x	yes	no
			x	no	yes
Very Strong			x	yes	yes

Table 2. Indicator of affective bonds to Sälen, consisting of the origin of the respondents' parents, and whether the respondents have family or friends in Sälen today.

analysed mainly through three variables: 1) whether respondents' parents are originally from the Sälen area, and whether they still have 2) family or 3) friends living there (Table 2). The interviews indicate the crucial role of friends and family as the basis of long-term bonds to the place.

Unsurprisingly, the affective bonds to Sälen are very strong among the stayers and return migrants; even though the affective bonds are not as strong among the migrants, the difference is fairly small (Fig. 3). Many respondents, in all three migrant categories, have strong affective bonds to Sälen. One stayer explained the decision to live in Sälen: "I enjoy it very much in Sälen. I have my family and my roots here, so it feels natural to stay here. And there are jobs, making it possible to stay". A back-and-forth migrant said that the most important reason for not living in Sälen was that she does not enjoy service occupations, but that "friends and family make me visit Sälen occasionally". There is a slightly higher number of women with very strong affective bonds, and slightly lower number of women with loose affective bonds to Sälen. Personal roots are important for the migration decision but, as indicated by the quotations, strong affective bonds can be sustained even among different types of migrants, who still make different decisions as to whether to stay in or move from Sälen.

Another examined aspect of the respondents' background is whether or not they lived their first years in Sälen, in other words, whether they immigrated to Sälen. Those who did not live their first years in Sälen are most frequently found among

the migrants and slightly more frequently among the return migrants than among the stayers. There are more in-migrants than average in the back-and-forth categories, among both migrants and return migrants, possibly because they have affective bonds to other places as well as in Sälen, making migration to these places easier.

Another indication of migrants' affective bonds to Sälen is how often they visit the place. Most migrants visit the Sälen area four to nine times a year, maintaining their social relationships with family and friends. Six migrants visit Sälen more than ten times per year, and all but two of them live in the same region as Sälen. Fourteen migrants visit Sälen fewer than four times per year. Those, who do not visit Sälen at all, no longer have family remaining there.

Tourism flows and social ties

Möller's (2012) study of the adult transition in Sälen demonstrated the importance of social relationships during youth and the adult transition. The respondents mentioned the seasonal workers as the most common group in which to make new friends and contacts. Although tourists and entrepreneurs were also important, they did not as often become friends but remained work contacts or simply contributed to the vibrant atmosphere in Sälen. The seasonal workers were described as most important for the young adult inhabitants a few years after graduating

from high school, when they were about the same age as most seasonal workers and before they became established as adults with permanent jobs and their own homes and families. In the telephone interviews, the respondents were asked whether they have had social relationships with tourists or people from elsewhere working in tourism in Sälen, and whether they still have social relationships with them. A *tourism social relationship index* was constructed using the responses to those questions and additional respondent comments about these questions. The respondents were divided into three categories depending on their social relationships with either tourists or tourism workers: 1) *Low importance*, including those with few or no social relationships, described as not important, 2) *Medium importance*, including those with social relationships during the childhood, youth, and young adult years, but that mostly have no contact any more, or at least no relationships of significance and 3) *High importance*, including those with social relationships during the childhood, youth, and young adult years, and that have maintained contact with some of these acquaintances (Fig. 4).

Highly important tourism relationships are most common among both stayers and return migrants, while among migrants the medium importance category is most common. This may at least partly be explained by the fact that it may be easier to maintain relationships made in tourism when still

living in a tourism-dominated area (especially if the area is where the relationships began). Many inhabitants of Sälen work in the tourism industry (some respondents claim all, directly or indirectly), making previous relationships formed in that industry more likely to remain relevant.

The education stayers respondents overall have more and higher-importance tourism relationships than do the all-time stayers. All the low-importance tourism relationships can be found in the latter group. In the back-and-forth sub-categories, no respondents have low-importance tourism relationships, supporting the findings of Möller (2012) that young adults can return to Sälen and get a job in the tourism industry when they quit a job or finish education elsewhere. There are no substantial differences between male and female respondents in this respect.

The respondents were asked how tourism affected their childhood and youth, and there was consensus among all respondents – i.e. stayers, migrants, and return migrants – as to the importance of tourism for Sälen. The most common answer is that Sälen would not exist at all without tourism, and another frequent answer is that there are jobs in Sälen thanks to tourism. One stayer said that “if it had not been for tourism, neither my parents nor anyone else would have lived here. Mom worked in Sälen Mountains throughout my childhood, and dad at the power plant. None of them would have had jobs without tourism”. Only minor differences are seen between the three migrant

Affective bonds to Sälen

	Loose	Medium	Strong	Very strong
Stayers				
Migrants				
Return migrants				

Fig. 3. Analysis of the affective bonds in Sälen of the three migrant categories *stayers*, *migrants*, and *return migrants*. The grey shading indicates the author’s interpretation of how the respondents are distributed in the three migrant categories. Dark grey indicates the biggest group of respondents in the given category, light grey indicates a smaller but still significant group of respondents in the category, and white indicates no respondents in the migrant category.

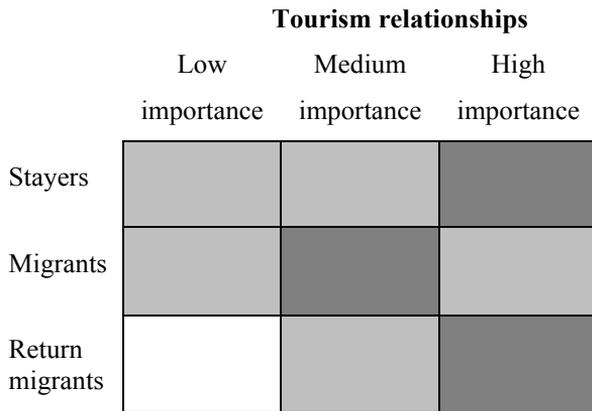


Fig. 4. Importance of the tourism relationships of respondents in the three migrant categories *stayers*, *migrants*, and *return migrants*. The grey shading indicates the author's interpretation of how the respondents are distributed in the three importance categories. Dark grey indicates the biggest group of respondents, light grey indicates a smaller but still significant group of respondents, and white indicates no respondents in the respective migrant categories.

categories in this regard, except for a slightly weaker focus on social contributions (e.g. opportunities to meet new people, tourism “makes things happen” in Sälen, and influences from elsewhere) and a somewhat stronger focus on economic contributions (e.g. opportunities to start one’s own business or get a job) among the stayers than in the other two categories. Descriptions of social contributions were most frequent among the back-and-forth return migrants. One back-and-forth return migrant found the influence of tourism very significant, especially “the social contribution – that you get to meet people you don’t get to know closer. It is like a city in winter”.

Several respondents emphasized the importance of meeting new and diverse people, some of whom they got to know well, some who became acquaintances, and others whom they never met again. A return migrant described how social relationships with tourists and seasonal workers “constitute a good social network. I don’t know how it is compared with bigger cities, but it has generated quite a few acquaintances, because people pass through Sälen, as it is in a tourist area”. The number of people passing through Sälen is huge and it is impossible for the inhabitants to get to know all of them. Most tourists stay for a few days, often not more than a week, and the seasonal workers for a few months each season. Some seasonal workers return the next season but others do not. A migrant reflected on the flow of people passing through Sälen and through his life: “I have actually been thinking about it recently, that so many people

have passed through my life. Many people come and go, so I’ve gotten used to people passing through and not returning. Many people move to Sälen but move out again. You might keep in touch for a while, but then you lose [contact]”. Some respondents have made close friends and others just acquaintances among the people passing through Sälen. Many of the respondents’ new friends and acquaintances constitute what Granovetter (1973: 1364) defines as bridges, i.e. “the only path between two points” in a social network. Such bridges are important for the diffusion of influence and information, mobility opportunities, and community organization. Constant flows of people enable such bridges to be built, especially in the high season. Thanks to the wide range of departure locations, these bridges are built to people residing in many places throughout Sweden.

Mobility in Sälen

Sälen is not only rural but also fairly peripheral, located approximately five hours by car from Stockholm and half that travel time from Falun-Borlänge, the region’s urban centre. The sparse population in rural areas makes the population base too small for many services to be offered nearby (Furuseth 1998; Pucher & Renne 2005). Accordingly, rural residents must generally travel farther and therefore often make fewer trips than do urban residents. The travel time is often not much greater than in urban areas, however, be-

cause of higher travel speeds in rural areas (Millward & Spinney 2011). Several respondents described an everyday life in which they are used to travelling to both Malung – almost 70 kilometres from Sälen village – and Mora – approximately 90 kilometres from Sälen village – often several times a month. They are used to travelling great distances, even though these are not appreciated as such, and think that they are naturally linked to rural life. A stayer asked about the negative aspects of living in Sälen mentioned “the distance to everything – but that is something you choose if you live here”.

Another important aspect of youth mobility in Sälen is entering high school. Although not compulsory in Sweden, nearly all students continue on to high school after completing elementary school. The high school nearest the Sälen area is located in Malung, almost 70 kilometres from Sälen village. It is possible to commute there every day, but most respondents have moved to Malung for at least some of their high school years. Many inhabitants choose high schools even farther from Sälen, where daily commuting is impossible. A back-and-forth migrant described the discussions related to out-migration and the choice of high school:

“There were discussions of that, of course. Out-migrating for high school was an obvious choice. It was a practical solution because commuting 160 kilometres each day is not so fun. And then it was probably natural to move farther away, when you had already moved from Sälen. It was as if high school was a stepping stone”.

The respondent describes a societal structure in which most young inhabitants of the Sälen area live elsewhere during their high school years. For this respondent, this was just one step on the path away from Sälen, but even those who had no intentions of out-migrating from Sälen loosened their ties to Sälen at least somewhat and presumably made some new acquaintances in their high school location. Getting a job, making new friends, and meeting a partner are some ways new ties can be created or strengthened, reducing the motivation to return to Sälen after high school.

The description of high school as the first step farther away from Sälen was not predominant among the respondents, but just one of several descriptions. Several respondents claimed that girls more than boys strove to leave Sälen, which is also apparent in the dominance of females in the *Mi-*

grants – *One move* category. The boys more often wanted to complete high school and start to work as soon as possible:

“The girls most often moved from Sälen and some guys as well but not as many, it was mostly the girls. There has never been any shortage of jobs – they have always been available here, if you don’t want any particular kind of job, of course. In forestry and tourism, there are always jobs here, but maybe not office or engineering jobs. Then you might have to move”.

These boys are described as enjoying their lives in Sälen and just wanting to find a decent, reasonably paid job. A stayer said that he was not interested in moving from Sälen after high school: “I was more interested in getting started and working as quickly as possible. I’ve never had any of those thoughts. It was important to start working”. They are prepared to commute farther if they have to, but prefer to keep their residence in Sälen, and some of them commute on a weekly basis: “If you went away, you did that to take a job. There was no question of moving permanently. Most of the ones I hung out with stayed. Many of them spend time elsewhere to work even though they still live here. And I have done that myself”, one stayer said. Another stayer said that he had lived in Lima village his whole life except for the years at high school. Later in that interview, when discussing his previous jobs, it came out that he had worked and commuted weekly to Stockholm for five years. Obviously, these five years of commuting were not important enough to him to warrant mentioning and he considered himself just an ordinary Lima resident even during this period of commuting. This accentuates the mobility pattern in Sälen described by many respondents. There is a high turnover of people in Sälen, with tourists, seasonal workers, and permanent residents all passing through at different velocities, making high mobility a natural part of everyday life.

The respondents reflected on their migration decisions and on how they were discussed. Some found Sälen too small for them and longed for a bigger city. Other respondents were satisfied with life in Sälen. Several migrants had moved from Sälen because the type of job they wanted does not exist there. Many migrants have friends and old classmates who have returned to Sälen, especially when they have children. There were no differences between the sexes in this matter. The general picture from the respondents is simply that some young in-

habitants moved and some stayed. Neither group was considered better than the other, unlike as reported by Jamieson (2000), Svensson (2006), and Kåks (2007), who claimed that migrants are considered more successful than stayers in rural areas.

Several migrants said that they personally favoured returning to Sälen, but that their life situation was not currently conducive to such a move. One migrant said that he and his wife would like to move to Sälen, but not until "the kids have grown up and can make their own decisions about where to live. We put the kids 100% in first place, and not us adults". Other respondents said that their partners did not want to move to Sälen, even though they themselves wanted to. Another reason for not returning to Sälen was one's career when the respondent's occupation could not be practised in Sälen. Several migrants mentioned that they were open to returning to Sälen as retirees.

There is no clear connection between how rooted the respondents are in Sälen and how attached they feel to the place. Some of the in-migrants with parents from elsewhere feel very attached to Sälen, while others have a lot of family in Sälen, with both parents being from there, but do not feel very attached to Sälen. The reasons underlying attachment to Sälen were not analysed in depth in this study. Social background may be at least partly significant, because many jobs that require an academic education do not exist in Sälen. The question is whether other factors are at play as well. The respondents express different approaches to the rurality of the area, some appreciating it very much while others find it too limiting. Attachment to place, social background, personal preferences, and childhood experience (e.g. what friends they had and what leisure activities they enjoyed) were all mentioned when discussing the decision to migrate. The interviews indicate that tourism unquestionably affects the minds of the inhabitants of Sälen. The flow of people and influences passing through Sälen as a result of tourism has clearly increased the inhabitants' opportunities.

Conclusions

This study has examined the influence of tourism in Sälen on young inhabitants' perceptions of and affective bonds to Sälen. Students of the 1993–1995 graduating classes in the Sälen area elementary school, including stayers, migrants, and return

migrants, were interviewed. The following are the key results of this study.

The first research question concerns how tourism affects the young inhabitants' perceptions of the opportunities to remain in or return to Sälen. Sälen could usefully be interpreted as a *mixed landscape*. The rural Sälen has not been superseded by the influence of tourism but coexists with it, forming a context containing both rural and urban influences. In this mixed social landscape, tourism adds features – for example, a supply of jobs, services, and opportunities to extend one's social network – to the rural Sälen.

The respondents describe their perceptions of Sälen as predominantly positive. Although youth out-migration does exist in Sälen, the out-migrants do not feel a need to leave Sälen because it is such a bad place to live. In this study, the respondents did not describe the stayers as less successful than the out-migrants, as opposed to what has often been reported in previous research on rural youth out-migration.

The second research question regards how tourism affects the young inhabitants' social relationships in Sälen. There are many opportunities to create weak social ties in Sälen, ties reaching throughout Sweden. These weak social ties are important for people (especially young people) in Sälen, because of their importance in diffusing influences and ideas and for job contacts, which are significant in the adult transition, especially in rural areas.

The third research question regards how tourism affects the young inhabitants' relationship to mobility. High mobility is part of life in Sälen. People in Sälen, as in many other sparsely populated areas, are used to travelling long distances to access certain amenities, such as specialized shops, services, and entertainment. In addition, a large flow of more or less temporary visitors/inhabitants passes through Sälen. This is considered normal by the inhabitants of Sälen, as are the inhabitants' shorter or longer stays elsewhere, or commuting to jobs in distant locations while keeping their residence in the Sälen area.

The contribution of tourism in Sälen is significant in several dimensions. Even though the opportunities afforded by the area are not infinite – some inhabitants still find Sälen too small and limited – they are extraordinary compared with those of the rural areas often described in previous research (e.g., Cloke et al. 1997; Rye 2006). Both rural youth out-migration and rural dullness have been reported, primarily when the inhabitants are in their late teens. As in other rural areas,

this life phase is important in forming residents' perceptions of Sälen's attractiveness.

During the adult transition, the life phase when rural areas are often perceived as least attractive, Sälen has much to offer. Employment, entertainment, leisure, and good opportunities for creating new social relationships, what Massey (2005) define as *the chance of space* where "otherwise unconnected narratives may be brought into contact", are among the most important features making Sälen more attractive than other rural areas among young adults. Sälen provides a dynamic environment offering increased opportunities. Similar to Jamieson's (2000) findings, the respondents' attachment to Sälen is not simply correlated to their place of residence nor their roots there. It is not only easy to out-migrate from Sälen, as in many other rural areas, but also to return. Whether the respondents identify themselves as inhabitants in Sälen or not seems much related to their attachment to Sälen. The diverse range of migrant decisions and histories, and the respondents' descriptions of high mobility suggest that fixed migrant categories (like stayers and leavers) are of small relevance and that Massey's (2005: 9) perspective on space as "constituted through interactions" and always under construction is better suited to understand places like Sälen.

A societal structure seems to exist in which many jobs and much education are available in urban but not rural areas, contributing to rural out-migration. Tourism suppresses but cannot fully eliminate the societal structure that results in rural youth out-migration. This study clearly demonstrates that tourism has increased the opportunities and contributed significantly to making Sälen more attractive among young adults. Is it reasonable to assume that tourism may contribute to reverse the rural out-migration trend and have similar effects in other tourism-dominated rural areas? Further research is necessary before general conclusions can be drawn.

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