
Destination Development in Northern Sweden's Pleasure Periphery: The Case of T'arnaby/Hemavan

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Abstract

Tourism has been considered a remedy for various problems of peripheral areas even in the Nordic countries. Although it often remains somewhat dubious what kind of problems the peripheral areas aim to cure through destination development, it is rather obvious that one complex of problems is related to population. A declining population base and ageing populations are prominent problems in large parts of northern Sweden. Hence, the rather simple question asked in this paper is to what extent tourism development has a positive impact on population development in a rural destination and how this is related to other development in the rural arena. Theoretically the paper addresses the nexus of tourism and community development. Departing from the staple thesis on peripheral economies and recent ideas of evolutionary economic geography and path dependency, it is discussed how the tourism path is established and sustained, and how it relates to other industrial sectors in peripheral communities. Moreover, challenges caused by temporary population such as second home owners and seasonal workers are discussed, too. Empirically, the paper scrutinizes population and tourism development in northern Sweden, 1990-2015, focusing not least the mountain resort of T'arnaby/Hemavan. Preliminary results indicate that tourism development seldom is able to cure demographic problems in the periphery. However, the tourism labor market seems to attract young people into the periphery. Hence, the major impact of tourism is not necessarily related to the labor market but rather to its impact on the population composition in peripheral municipalities. Still, tourism is usually not able to balance other structural problems of the northern Swedish periphery and indeed, it also may cause lock-in effects and staple traps.

Keywords: Tourism, destination development, path dependency, staple thesis, Sweden

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