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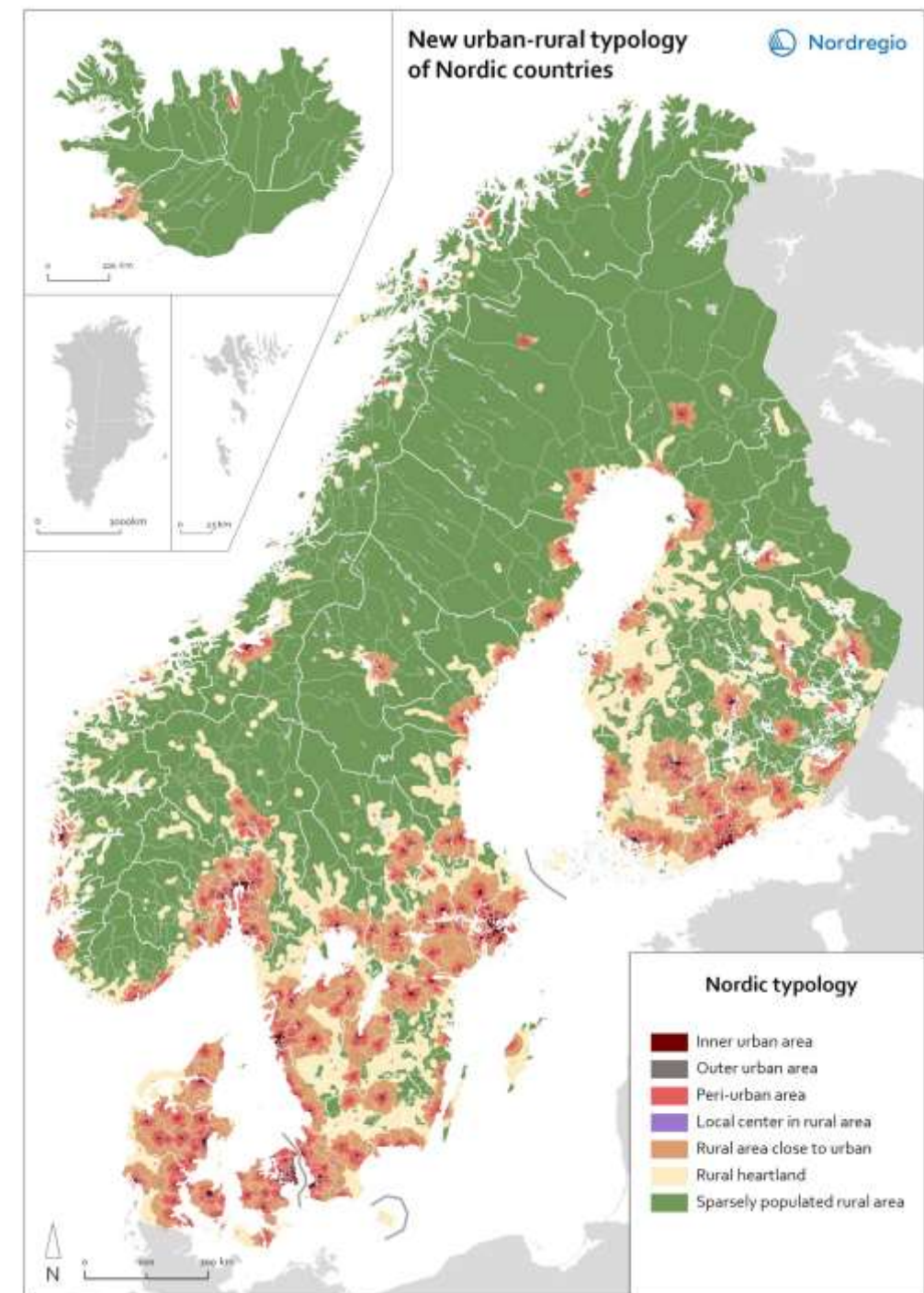
# Beyond Resource Extraction

Tourism Labour Market Structure and Dynamics  
in the Industrial Peripheries of Arctic Sweden

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# Background

- The Swedish Upper North (Västerbotten & Norrbotten) is a vast, **sparsely populated area** (ca. 4 people per sq. km) that covers 1/3 of Swedish territory.
- The region is historically dominated by **extractive industries**, with a focus on forestry, mining, and steel production.



# Context

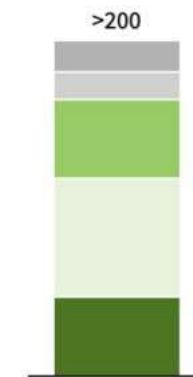
- In recent years, there has been a rapid development of **green tech** (renewable energy, batteries, hydrogen) megaprojects.
- Industries are promising to attract **substantial investment** (3,5 times the total national investment into similar sectors) and **create 25000 workplaces** (10% of the current Norrbotten's population).
- Workforce attraction and infrastructural transformation create fertile ground for new **consumption markets**, but also pose a challenge of **securing social sustainability** and **economic resilience**.

## Industribolagen planerar investeringar i Norrbotten på mer än 200 miljarder kronor till 2030

### Investeringar i de annonserade industriprojekten i Norrbotten

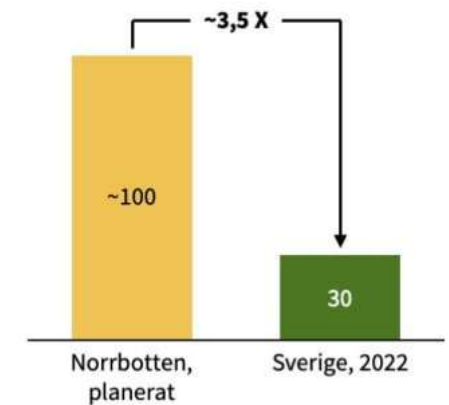
miljarder kr, kumulativt 2022–2030

■ LKAB ■ H2GS ■ SSAB ■ Power2Earth ■ Övriga



### Ojämförligt stora investeringar i Norrbotten

Årliga industriinvesteringar per capita, tkr 2022–2030



Utveckla Norrbotten, 2024

# Context

- Apart from industries, the region has become attractive for inbound tourism, with the number of **guest nights** during peak seasons reaching **17 per inhabitant**.
- The share of **international tourists** seeking a signature winter tourism experience is among the highest in the country (35%).
- By 2023, the overall **tourism consumption** value had returned to pre-pandemic levels, reaching a record **10,6 billion SEK**. (Tillväxtverket, 2024)
- Rapidly increasing demand for both domestic and international tourism creates **an extensive workload on the sector**, driven by small and medium-sized entrepreneurs (SMEs).
- With the unemployment rate being among the lowest in Sweden (3,8% in Norrbotten and 4,6% in Västerbotten compared to 6,1% national average) (Ekonomifakta, 2026), tourist entrepreneurs face **labour shortages** and tend to increasingly opt for **external recruitment**.

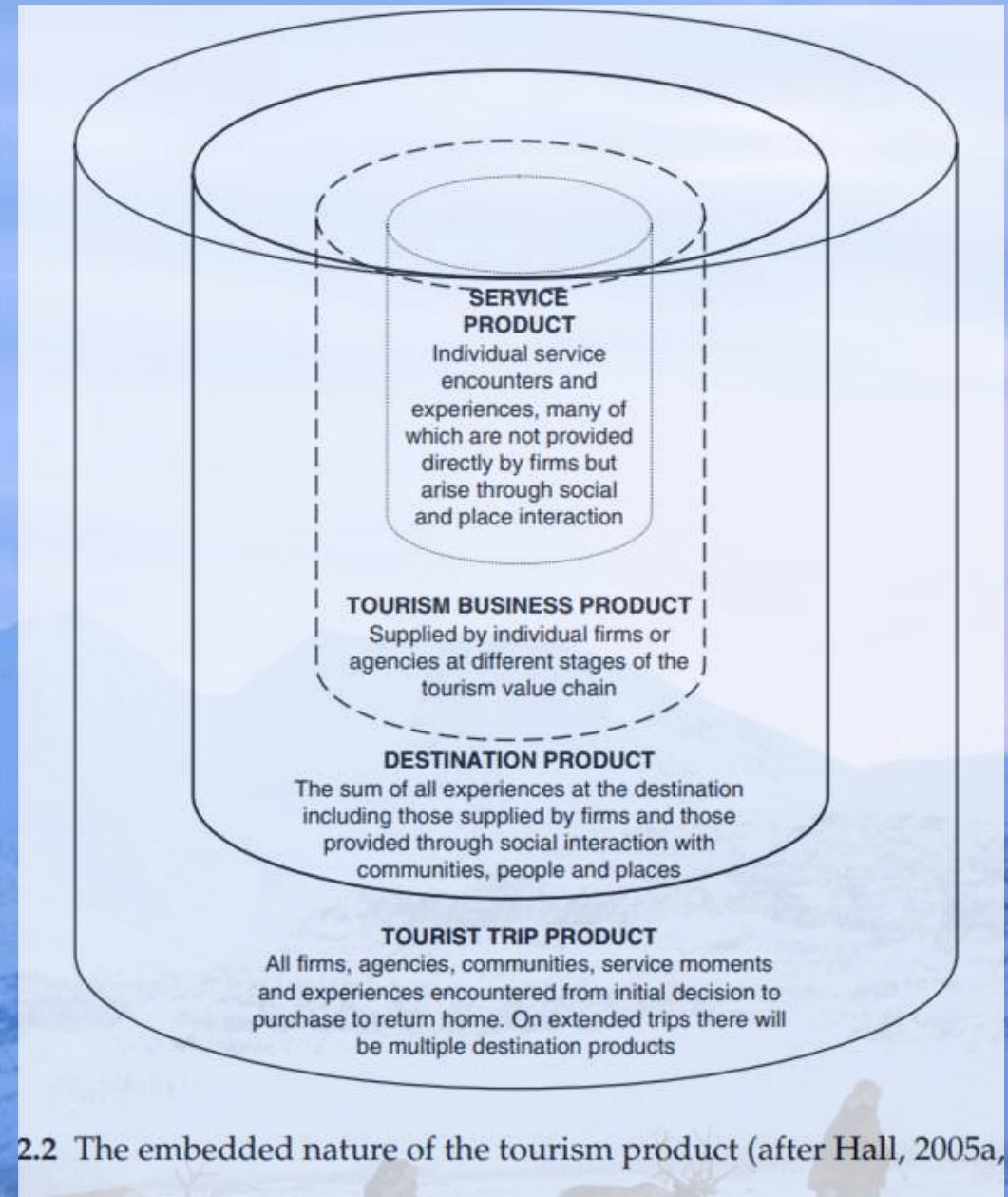


# (Expected) Local Implications of the Tourism Market in SPAs

- **Access to the labour market** for the population underrepresented in the industrial workforce (youth, women, international migrants) → tackling demographic decline
- **Economic diversification** → reduction of a single-industry dependence → enhanced resilience
- **Landscapes of service** → promotion of socially sustainable and people-oriented planning and placemaking
- **Local community empowerment** → new opportunities to work and start a business

# Tourism Product

- Tourism cannot be understood as an industry due to the complex and multifaceted nature of the tourism product, comprised of numerous commodities produced by unrelated sectors.
- The cumulative socio-economic impact of the emerging tourism market is challenging to assess.
- **How do we know the scope of tourism-driven socio-economic transformation?**



2.2 The embedded nature of the tourism product (after Hall, 2005a,

# Tourism Demand & Supply

- Tourism statistics mainly address tourism consumption, while the production side is largely overlooked
- Our suggestion is to explore the impacts of tourism on the regional economy and society through **labour structure and dynamics**, measuring its capacity to produce **human capital**

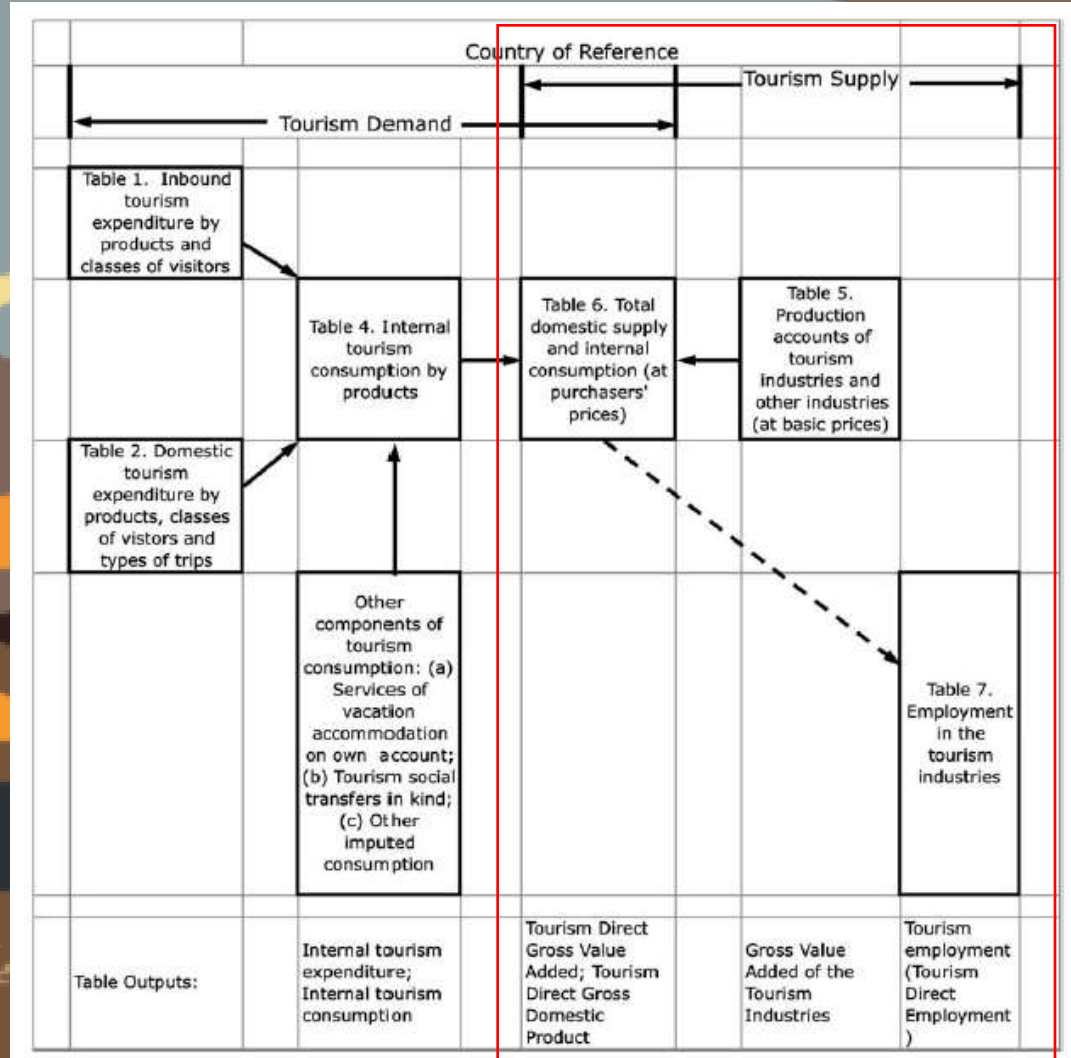


Figure 1. Tourism Satellite Account Tables Required for Estimating Macroeconomic Aggregates

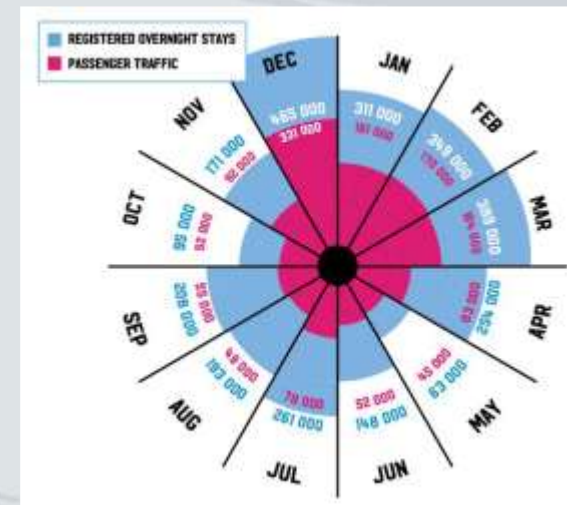
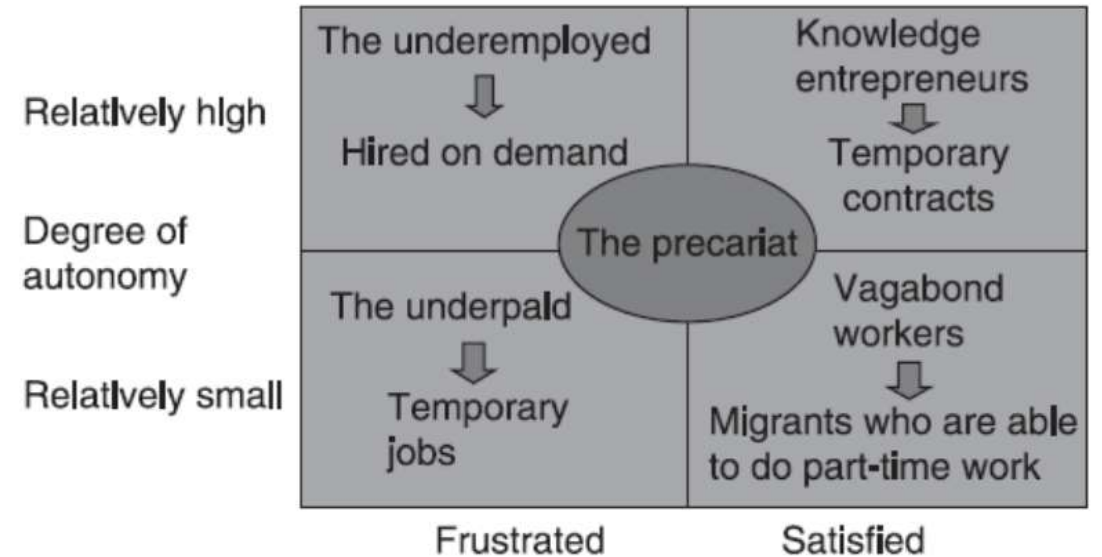
# Human Capital in Tourism

- Human capital is the stock of competencies, knowledge, social and personality attributes, including creativity, embodied in the ability to produce economic value (ILO, 2012).
- Human capital of labour has 2 key dimensions (Riley et al., 2002):
  - 1) Knowledge, skills, experiences and personal qualities that an employee contributes to a workplace.
  - 2) A learning environment provided to an employee at a workplace to enhance their productivity and qualifications.
- Example: migrant hotel receptionists in Iceland who benefited from their jobs by learning English and Icelandic, becoming more competitive in the local labour market (Wendt et al., 2020)
- In the peripheral context, tourism employment can become a source of the creative class (Thulemark et al., 2014)

# Tourism Labour Regime & Precariat

- Tourism production relies on mobile, flexible, short-term, part-time employment and cheap labour, typically provided by migrants (Robinson et al., 2019).
- Seasonal fluctuations of demand negatively affect work intensity (Rantala et al., 2019)
- Low probability of employee retention, vulnerability to job irregularity and uncertainty.
- Despite often being highly educated, tourist employees are underpaid.
- Lack of access to trade union membership and social welfare (Bohn & de Bernardi, 2020).

Johanssen, 2019



Rantala et al., 2019

# Research Aims & Questions

- Examine the composition and structure of the tourism-driven labour market in northern Sweden to estimate its local socio-economic effects and the contribution to the local human capital.
- Analyse employee mobilities in the tourism sector to reveal the essential patterns and the extent of precarity in tourism employment.
- Identify crucial locations attracting the external tourism workforce for further in-depth analysis.



# Conclusion: societal and academic relevance of tourism labour research

- Reveals structural patterns of local social development
- Enables the assessment of the cumulative impact of tourism production that typically comprises outcomes of unrelated sectors (transport, accommodation, catering, recreation, culture, etc.)
- Addresses the modern-day agenda for decent and sustainable employment, opposing the liminality and precarity





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# Thank you for your attention!

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