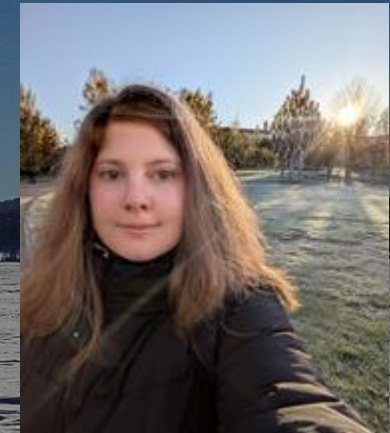


Facing the challenges of globalisation, the tourism sector in Arctic Sweden is at a crucial crossroads. The traditionally locally anchored workforce is no longer sufficient, and now the focus is shifting globally to solutions. Can international labour be the key to success for the rural tourism industries?



To understand what these acute challenges of workforce shortage in the rural tourism industry in Arctic Sweden entail, we received funding from the Kamprad Family Foundation for the project *The Internationalization of Tourism Labour Markets in Rural Arctic Sweden*. The project was led by prof. Dieter Müller.

Geography dpt., Umeå Univ. Sweden



Hotel Cabins



Family Cabins



Reception & Lounge



Restaurant & Bar

Starting points

- Positive developments in tourism in the North of Sweden
- Several tourism products have been successful on an international market
- Often SMEs in lodging and nature-based activities
- But finding workers is a challenge
- International recruitment replaces local recruitment



Changing tourism

- Arctification of northern Swedish tourism
- Successful businesses face challenges when recruiting workers
 - Demographic changes (regionally)
 - Outmigration
 - Competition on the labour market
 - New regulations re in-migration
- Seasonal workers and economic leakage (missing local economic effects)
- International lifestyle-led entrepreneurs may have different goals than in regional development strategies (or DMOs)

Picture: Dieter Müller



Aim & RQ – consequences of internationalisation

Project aim: to assess the consequences of the internationalization of the rural tourism labour market. Core **research questions** are:

1. *Where geographically does the internationalization of the labour market occur and what does it imply for the tourism companies?*
2. *How do tourism entrepreneurs attract and retain labour and particularly international labour?*
3. *How does the relationship between companies and communities change when increasingly non-local labour is recruited?*
4. *How do tourism entrepreneurs cope with challenges that arise from the above?*



Local place attachment?

- Place attachment (“corporate-culture carriers”) provides keys to success for the business:
 - Securing access to resources
 - Diminishing transaction costs
 - Easing knowledge transfer
 - More reciprocal trust
- But international seasonal workers may lack the willingness, means and capacity to create and maintain local contacts
- Internationalisation as a risk to successful tourism businesses?

Picture: Dieter Müller



Exploratory fieldwork (feb & aug 2025):

- To **explore** the geography of the valley(s)
 - distances, landscapes, travel times, roads, places to visit, etc.
- To **establish** contacts with potential partners and interviewees
 - informants, key persons, managers, staff, etc.
- To **identify** socio-economic issues at the crossroads of local, rural, community development and tourism business development
 - regarding visions for the future and how they are facilitated or hampered by current practical potentials and challenges (respectively)

Informal interview: manager “Lodge 1”

- **History of the firm:** the whole business originates from the local sports club. “My grandma’s father started it all in 1927.”
 - **1950’s:** “Norrbotten’s most popular dancing place”.
 - **1990’s:** when the dancing trend started to decrease, cabins were built.
 - “Then local engagement decreased. We built a group that tried to commercialise this into a tourism business. This is a long process, all locals have emotional ties to this place.”
 - **2007:** a limited company was established. Land was assigned to the business, which they rented from the sports club.
 - My **uncle** bought the dancing park, the cabins and the football pitch, to make sure we would have land to develop the business on.
 - **2010:** the Lodge opened. Economy was tough. “I was in the board till 2020.”
 - **Pandemic:** “bankrupt or invest. We invested. I became temp. manager.”

Informal interview: manager “Lodge 1”

- “**Collaborating** with many sports clubs: renting meeting rooms from them the whole time.” But more and closer collaboration with other tourism entrepreneurs: “we are all in the same boat”.
- **The business offers** hotel, cabins, camping site, restaurant, snow-scooter-safaris, aurora safaris, moose-safaris, dogsled tours, ice-fishing, snowshoe hiking, wellness and ayurveda.
 - summer: weddings, fishing and hunting (“but this should increase”)
 - winter: dogsled tours (with 4 operators) and safaris are offered by or in collaboration with other businesses
 - One dogsled business carries out 75% of all dogsled safaris in the area
 - We are providing food for all tourism facilities (businesses) in the area
- **Summer** and **winter** are the main seasons. In shoulder seasons: guests from other businesses or universities for conferences, etc.

Informal interview: manager “Lodge 1”

- ***How many people are working here?*** Rather counting in “fte” than nr. of people, because how much they work varies a lot, e.g. depending on events (when ~15-20 people are needed).
 - “They are mostly recruited through informal networks, on a seasonal basis.”
 - “When they start working the whole year round (after working seasonally), they become corporate-culture-carriers.”
- ***Where are they from?*** Canada, Finland, France, Ecuador, Germany, Greece (2), Italy, Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Venezuela...
 - “Multicultural in many ways”, “more nationalities here than in most urban areas”, “more people working in tourism from abroad than from Sweden”
 - Many are staying: Canada, France, Ecuador, Germany, Switzerland, NL

Informal interview: staff member “Lodge 1”

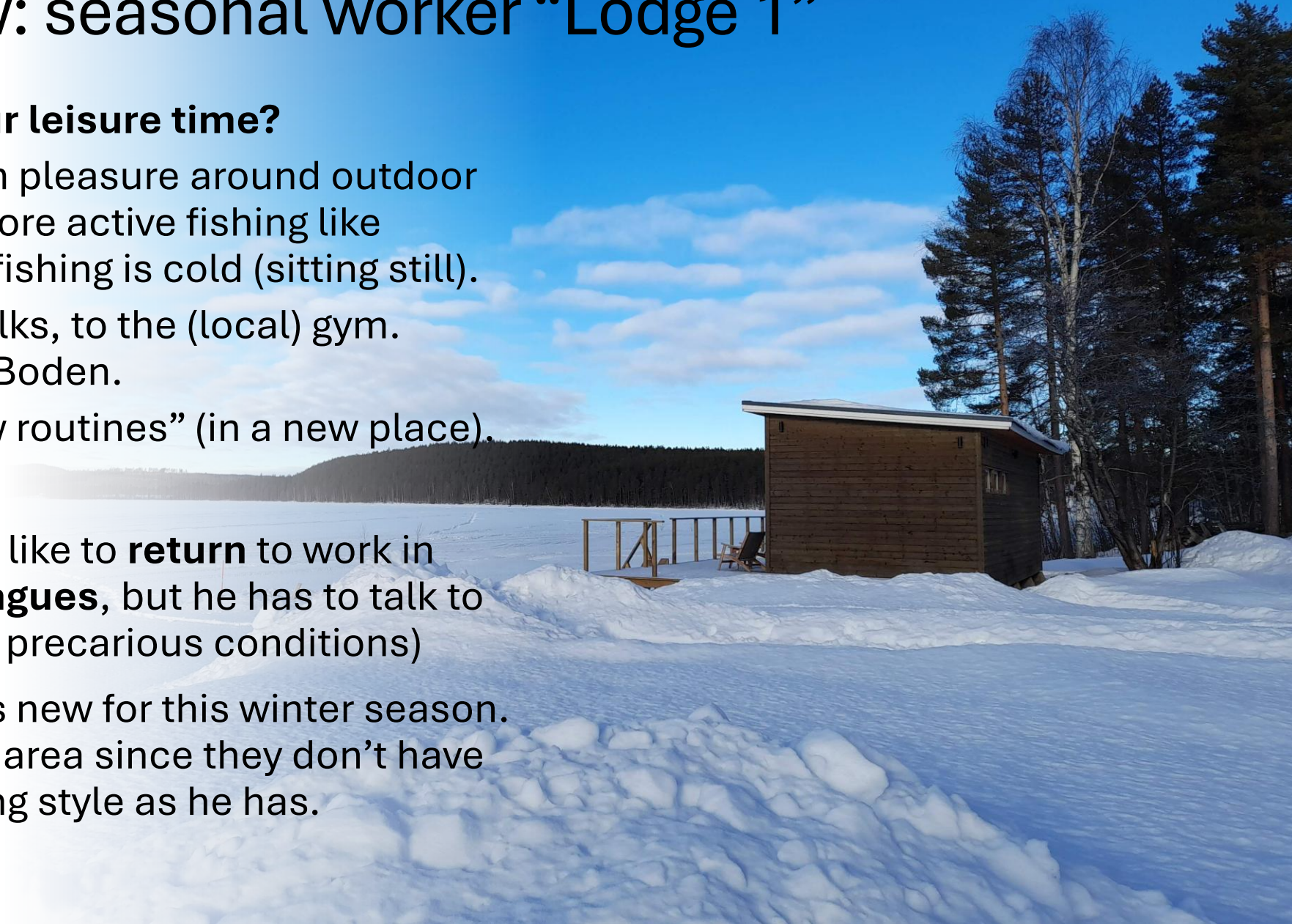
- From Italy, about 35 years, married 7-8 months ago.
 - Has worked with gastronomy for 4 yrs in Italy. Has sold wine in Italy.
- **June-Sept:** working for an Italian lodge-owner in Junosuando (Nb).
- **Sept-Nov:** in Italy with his wife.
- **Nov:** worked in Costa Rica (which was the Italian owner’s idea).
- Sent CV to different lodges and received replies from 3 lodges.
- **Nov 2024 - March 2025:** Lodge 1 (for the first time)(hopes for more)
- **May 2025:** thinking of working in Mexico. “Life is too short to be boring”
- Next step: tailoring his mobility w his wife’s work (outdoor sports, Italy)

Informal interv.: seasonal worker, “Lodge 1”

- He is crazy about fishing and outdoor activities!
- Can you **tell me about this job** (at Lodge 1), more specifically?
 - Working with services: cleaning, picking up guests from the airport, being an outdoor guide. In summer: being a fishing guide and telling stories.
 - Yesterday, he took two guests to Luleå *Gammelstad* and to a Sami girl / family with reindeer.
 - Actually, he was not working today but the manager called him to ask to come to the lodge and work anyway (cleaning after 3 weeks of car events).
 - Through an Italian travel agency, many Italian guests are coming to the lodge. They are very picky. He arranges activities for them = a big task!
- The lodge provides housing for the staff in the village.

Informal interview: seasonal worker “Lodge 1”

- **What are you doing in your leisure time?**
 - mostly busy for his own pleasure around outdoor activities: he prefers more active fishing like flyfishing because ice-fishing is cold (sitting still).
 - trekking, snowshoe walks, to the (local) gym. shopping in Luleå and Boden.
 - “important to start new routines” (in a new place).
- After the season, he would like to **return** to work in Lodge 1, he likes his **colleagues**, but he has to talk to the manager about that. (= precarious conditions)
- Some of the kitchen staff is new for this winter season. Maybe they will **stay** in the area since they don't have the same multilocal working style as he has.



Local rural development (run by the municipality)



Seasonal workers shop locally in the grocery shop and the local second-hand shop, and they join the local gym...
...but what about other engagement e.g. in local civil society and events?

Previous research

- Regenerative tourism (Dredge 2022, Bellato et al 2022)
- Seasonal workers: (Duncan, Heldt Cassel, Möller, Thulemark, etc.)
 - life course stage, motivations, strategies, trajectories, etc.
- LM entrepreneurs' embeddedness (Eimermann & Kordel 2018)
 - a mix of institutional, economic and social embeddedness
- Multi-local practices in a pleasure periphery (Ekecrantz et al 2026)
 - people leading an everyday life in multiple places
 - ...who divide their time between 2 or more residences in diff. places
 - ...while their lives unfold across multiple locations simultaneously

Ekecrantz et al. (2026) continued

- Emphasising spatial relationality and the transitional practices that link places together (Schier et al 2015)
- Three **dimensions** (continua) of multilocal practices
 - Temporal commitment (time): unilocal – multilocal orientations
 - Place relations (space): egalitarian – hierarchical approaches
 - Conduct of everyday life (practices): segregation – integration of activities
- A **typology** of four multilocal practices (re drivers and features)
 - Rooted aspiring unilocals (roots in Åre, working elsewhere)
 - Double-rooted urbanites (roots elsewhere, living part-time in Åre)
 - Lifestyle committed (almost) anywhere workers
 - Escapist second-home owners

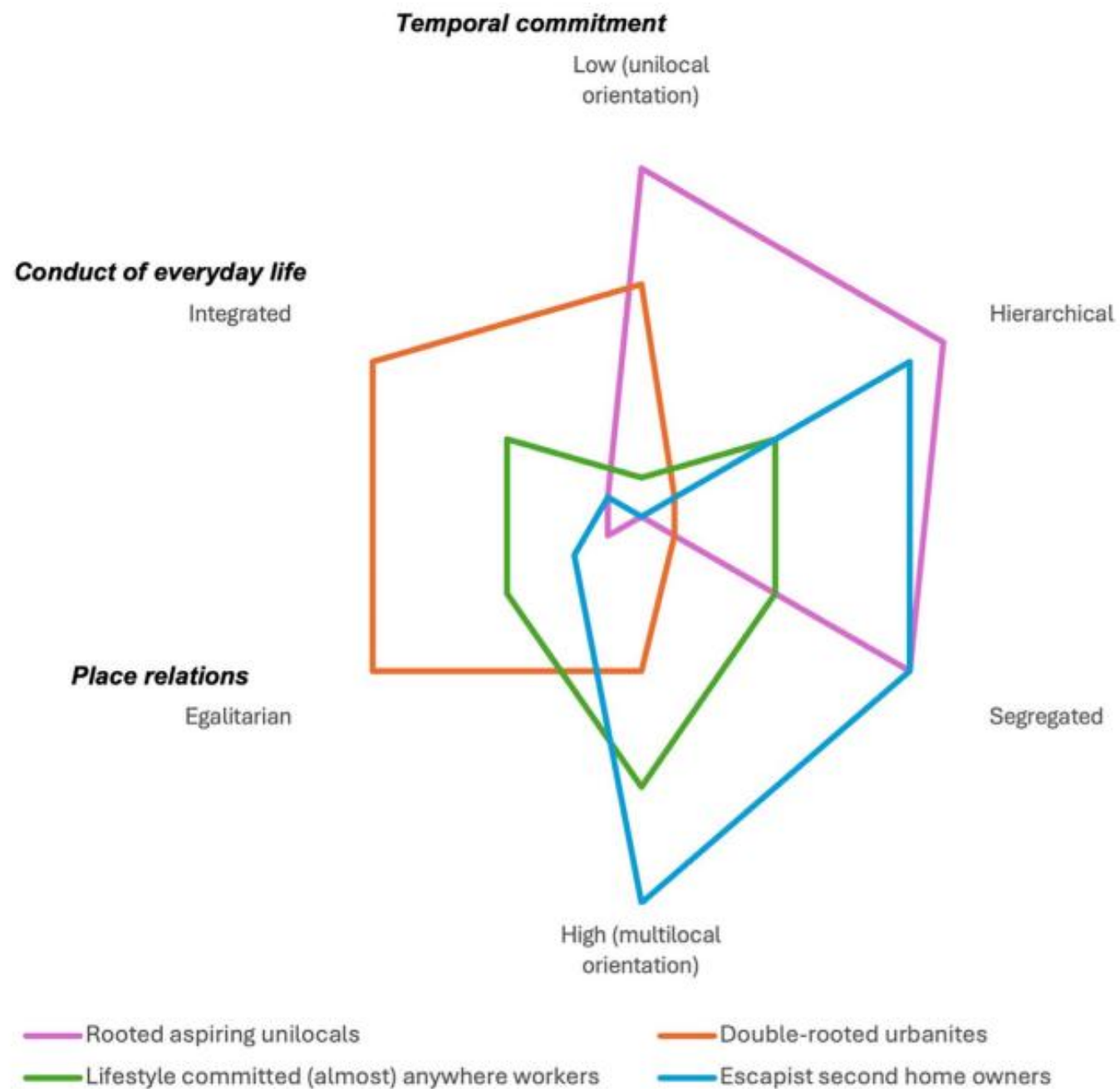














Figure 2. *Typology of multilocal living practices across the dimensions (continua) of temporal commitment, place relations and conduct of everyday life.*

Ekecrantz et al. (2026), concluding discussion

- One potential multilocal practice type is absent from the typology: the intersection of egalitarian place relations, an integrated everyday life and high commitment to multilocal living
- Such a practice could perhaps [...] be found in seasonal mobility between homes across international borders [...] where multilocals may have equally strong place attachment and engage in similar daily activities
- In other geographies, the place-related qualities that shape multilocal living may be very different (!)

Potential future focus – how to think about seasonal workers' contributions to community

- On the cross-roads between community studies and rural research in Sweden (Agnidakis et al 2022)
- Local (economic) development associations
- Sports clubs and events (e.g. Winterfestival)
- Village associations and “folkets hus”
- Seasonal workers' activities / businesses (?)
- Any thoughts / ideas?

 <p>Niemisels AIK Gym, elljusspår, skaterleder, hockeyplan, fotbollsplan m.m.</p> <p>Välkommen till vårt gym! Medlemskap i NAIK krävs: Enskild 100kr, Familj 200kr Bg 175-1288 Swish 123 040 11 74</p> <p>Gymavgifter från och med 1/6 2023: Engångskort 50 kr Månadskort 200 kr 3-månaderskort 500 kr Halvårskort 900 kr Heltårskort 1600 kr</p> <p>Har en förälder löst gymkort så tränar ungdom upp till 18 år gratis. Annars halva priset upp till 18 år.</p> <p>Tobias Lundmark 070-311 81 19 Oskar Niemi 072-206 81 82</p>	 <p>Vedaklubben Skoter och fiske</p> <p>Premiär Vedatjörn Midsommarafton kl. 9</p> <p>Håll utkik efter våra aktiviteter på Facebook och anslag!</p> <p>Medlemsavgift: 300 kr/år Bg: 655-2681 Swish: 123 265 92 82</p> <p>Följ oss gärna!</p>	 <p>Gunnarsby SK</p> <p>Glöm ej att betala medlemsavgiften för 2023</p> <p>50 :- enskild 150:- familj</p> <p>Plusgiro: 482380-3 Swish: 123 286 11 10 Ange namn</p> <p>För info: 070-332 58 33 Följ oss gärna!</p>	 <p>Sörbys IF</p> <p>Vill Du stödja SIF? Beta!o medlemskap till bankgiro: 5879 - 6251 swish: 123 627 92 10 enskild 150kr, familj 300kr</p> <p>Skriv fullständiga namn</p> <p>Nils Hansson 070-508 11 95 Niklas Högström 073-064 05 38 Följ oss gärna!</p>
 <p>Överstbys byaförening</p> <p>Vi hyr ut vår fina bygård till alla slags evenemang: dräsmöten, kalas, bröllop, dop m.m. Övernattnings-möjligheter finns!</p> <p>Bli medlem 150kr enskild, 250kr familj Pg: 137115-2</p> <p>Info och bokning: 073 - 066 51 76 Följ oss gärna!</p>	 <p>Lassbygården</p> <p>Hyr samlingslokal, övernattningsrum och/eller lägenhet med egen ingång.</p> <p>Bli medlem: 100 kr/person och år</p> <p>Lassbys Hembbygdsförening Bankgiro 151 - 4306</p> <p>Info och bokning: 070-312 60 55 www.lassbyn.se</p>	 <p>Bjurådalens bygdegårdsförening</p> <p>Hyra bygdegård eller bagarstuga: Monica 070 651 50 08</p> <p>Katja 070-535 91 08 Följ oss gärna!</p>	 <p>Niemisels bygdegårdsförening</p> <p>Vandrarhemmet öppet 15 maj - 15 oktober</p> <p>Kom och baka i vår fina bagarstuga</p> <p>Glad sommar!</p> <p>Info och bokning: Susanne Öberg 073-026 28 71</p>
 <p>Gunnarsbys byaförening</p> <p>Bagarstugan är öppen för säsongen Övriga aktiviteter se Facebook</p> <p>Medlemsavgift: 200 kr familj 100 kr enskild Swish 123 374 40 18</p> <p>Info och bokning: 070-206 90 91 Följ oss gärna!</p>	 <p>Sörbyn-Sundsås hembygdsförening</p> <p>Lantmuseum, hallmuseum, loppis, cafékvällar, cirkelstudier Uthyrning av lokal & tvättmaskin.</p> <p>Se lokala anslag och Facebook Bli medlem. Enskild 100kr Familj 200kr Pg: 174941-5</p> <p>För info: 070-660 10 46 Följ oss gärna!</p>	 <p>Gunnarsbys Folkets Hus</p> <p>Under sommaren arrangeras en lång rad evenemang i samverkan med Forsbergs Gårds Handelsbod</p> <p>Se program och köp biljetter via forsbergs-gunnarsbyn.se</p> <p>9 september kl. 11-15 Grön Marknad.</p> <p>För info: 070-211 00 45 För övriga evenemang och biofilmer se Facebook och programblad</p>	 <p>Niemisels intresseförening</p> <p>Nu har vi 2 elcyklar till uthyrning på Niemisels livs 50 kr/dag</p> <p>Tärtcafé 19.- 23 juli olika tårter varje kväll</p> <p>Johanna Lundmark 070-696 40 17 Följ oss gärna på Niemisel med närliggande byar</p>

Thank you for your attention!



Marco.Eimermann@umu.se