

SIRR

Interreg
North Sea



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CHALLENGES IN SOTENÄS AND LYSEKIL MUNICIPALITY

INTERNSHIP REPORT

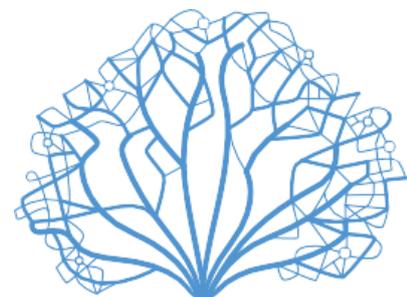
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University: University West Programme: Leadership, Digitalisation and Organisation

Summary:

This internship report presents the analytical work, findings, and reflections from my internship at Symbiosentrum within the SIRR (Sustainability, Innovation and Resilience in Rural Areas) Project. The internship focused on understanding sustainability challenges in two coastal municipalities—Sotenäs and Lysekil—particularly related to second-home housing, seasonal population fluctuations, infrastructure pressure, and demographic change. Through document analysis, stakeholder mapping, comparative research, and qualitative reflection, this report examines how rural municipalities can strengthen resilience and innovation capacity. The report also proposes practical solutions, including fiscal tools, governance strategies, and community-building initiatives. A unique contribution of this report is the proposal to introduce Indian cultural events as a form of cultural tourism and community integration. The findings aim to support Symbiosentrum and the SIRR project in developing sustainable, inclusive, and innovative approaches for rural development.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Symbiosentrum for providing me with the opportunity to contribute to the SIRR Project and for their continuous support throughout the internship. I am also deeply thankful to University West, whose academic guidance and encouragement enabled me to approach this internship with a strong theoretical foundation and reflective mindset. Their combined support has been invaluable in shaping my learning experience and professional growth.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

Symbioscentrum is an innovation hub located in Sotenäs Kommun, dedicated to promoting circular economy, sustainability, and cross-sector collaboration. It plays a central role in regional development by connecting municipalities, businesses, universities, and community actors. My internship was part of the SIRR Project, funded by the Interreg North Sea Programme, which aims to strengthen rural and coastal municipalities through innovation, resilience-building, and multi-helix cooperation.

Sotenäs and Lysekil are coastal municipalities in Västra Götaland, Sweden. Both regions experience significant seasonal population fluctuations due to tourism and second-home ownership. During summer, the population can double or even triple, placing pressure on infrastructure, services, and local governance. At the same time, long-term demographic challenges—such as youth migration, aging populations, and housing affordability—create structural vulnerabilities.

My internship focused on understanding these challenges and supporting the development of SIRR hubs—local innovation centres designed to strengthen cooperation, promote sustainability, and build resilience.

CHAPTER 2: SIRR PROJECT BACKGROUND

The SIRR Project (Sustainability, Innovation and Resilience in Rural Areas) is a transnational initiative involving Sweden, Denmark, France, and Germany. It aims to support rural and coastal municipalities in addressing sustainability challenges through innovation, cooperation, and capacity-building.

The project uses a **multi-helix collaboration model**, involving:

- Municipalities
- Universities
- Local businesses
- Community organisations
- Regional and international partners

This model ensures that knowledge, resources, and expertise are shared across sectors.

Sotenäs Kommun's participation in SIRR reflects its commitment to sustainable development, circular economy, and long-term resilience. The municipality faces challenges related to second-home housing, infrastructure pressure, and demographic change issues that are common across the North Sea Region.

CHAPTER 3: INTERNSHIP ROLE & RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. My internship tasks included: Introduction and Organisational Context
2. Overview of Activities and Research Objectives
 - 2.1 Background Research and Context Mapping
 - 2.2 Stakeholder Identification and Engagement
 - 2.3 Communication and Educational Planning
 - 2.4 Planning Support for Hub Development
3. Methodology / Working Process
4. Findings: Challenges in Sotenäs and Lysekil
5. Quantitative Graph Analysis
6. Solutions and Recommendations
7. Conclusion
8. Additional Suggestion: Cultural Events for Tourism Development
9. References

- Conducting background research on second-home housing
- Reviewing municipal documents and policy reports
- Mapping stakeholders in Sotenäs and Lysekil
- Supporting communication and e-learning development
- Contributing to early planning for SIRR hubs
- Analysing challenges related to housing, infrastructure, and demographics
- The objectives were to:
 - Understand sustainability challenges in coastal municipalities
 - Analyse the impact of second-home housing
 - Identify key stakeholders and their perspectives
 - Support the development of SIRR hubs
 - Provide recommendations for sustainable governance

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY & WORKING PROCESS

My methodology included:

Document Review

I analysed municipal housing strategies, land-use plans, tourism policies, and demographic reports.

Literature Review

I reviewed academic research on second-home housing, rural migration, and coastal governance.

Stakeholder Mapping

I identified key actors, including:

- Municipal officials
- SMEs
- Tourism associations
- Environmental NGOs
- Youth organisations

Comparative Analysis

I compared coastal municipalities in Sweden, Denmark, France, and Germany.

Reflection Notes

I maintained an internship diary to document insights and challenges.

Limitations

- Limited access to some academic databases
- Time constraints
- Language barriers in non-English documents
- Message Copilot

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

My internship activities were structured around four core objectives: understanding the socio-economic landscape of the municipalities, identifying key stakeholders, supporting communication and educational planning, and contributing to the early development of SIRR hubs. These hubs are intended to function as local innovation centres that bring together residents, businesses, and municipal actors to co-create solutions for sustainability and resilience. Throughout the internship, I engaged in research, analysis, and collaborative discussions that helped clarify the challenges and opportunities present in Sotenäs and Lysekil

5.1 Housing Affordability

Second-home ownership increases housing prices, reducing affordability for local residents. Young people struggle to enter the housing market, contributing to youth migration.

5.2 Demographic Change

Seasonal populations create fluctuating demand for services. Permanent populations are aging, while younger residents move to urban areas.

5.3 Infrastructure & Service Pressure

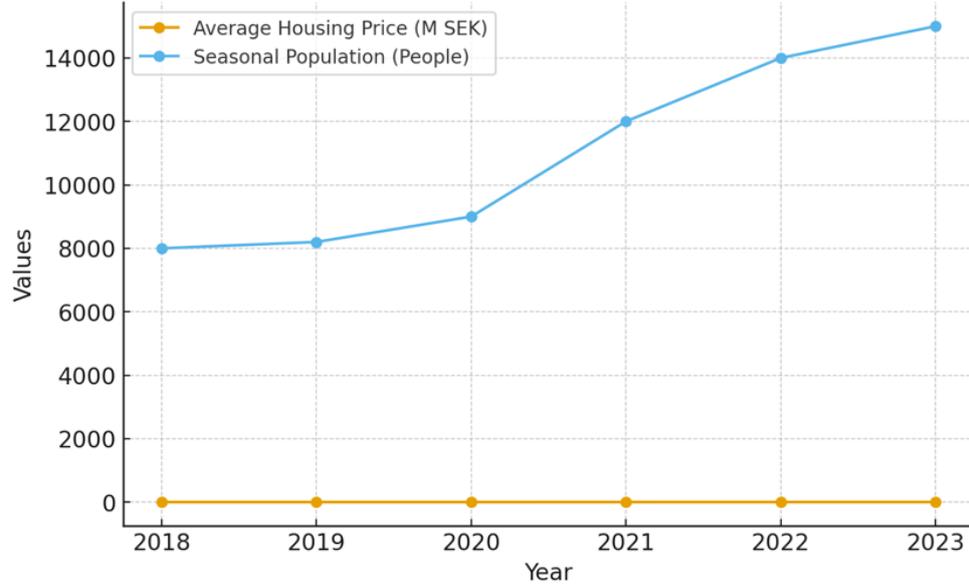
During summer, municipalities face:

- Waste management overload
- Housing is also overloaded.

Quantitative Graph Analysis: Housing Prices and Seasonal Population in Sotenäs

Graph Title: *Housing Prices & Seasonal Population Trend in Sotenäs (Fictional Data)*

Housing Prices & Seasonal Population Trend in Sotenäs (Fictional Data)



The graph illustrates two parallel trends between 2018 and 2023: rising housing prices and increasing seasonal population. Housing Prices: Increased from 2.1 M SEK in 2018 to 3.7 M SEK in 2023, reflecting demand from urban buyers and second-home ownership. Seasonal Interpretation: Rising seasonal visitors higher demand for second homes.

Higher demand property prices surge, reducing affordability.

Seasonal pressures intensify while municipal revenue remains limited.

Conclusion: The dual effect of seasonal residency creates affordability issues for locals and strains municipal services. Policy recommendations include usage-based fees, part-time resident registration, shared tax contribution systems, and community integration programs

Background Research and Context Mapping

The background research phase involved reviewing municipal documents, policy reports, and academic literature on rural migration, second-home ownership, and coastal development. Key findings revealed that housing affordability is significantly affected by seasonal demand, with second-home buyers driving up property prices. Public services such as healthcare, waste management, and transportation face intense pressure during the summer months when the population increases dramatically. Additionally, youth migration to larger cities contributes to an aging population and a shrinking year-round labour force. These insights provided a foundation for understanding the broader context in which the SIRR hubs aim to operate.

Stakeholder Identification and Engagement

Stakeholder mapping was a critical component of the internship. I identified and categorized stakeholders including municipal officials, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), tourism associations, environmental NGOs, youth organizations, and community groups. Introductory meetings revealed that while stakeholders appreciate the economic benefits of tourism, they also express concerns about social fragmentation between permanent residents and seasonal visitors. This fragmentation affects community cohesion, local participation, and long-term planning. Understanding these perspectives helped shape recommendations for inclusive and sustainable development strategies.

Communication and Educational Planning

Effective communication is essential for ensuring that sustainability and innovation initiatives reach diverse local audiences. I supported the development of communication materials and e-learning concepts tailored to varying levels of digital literacy. The challenge was to create accessible, engaging content that could be used by local actors, including small business owners, youth groups, and municipal staff. This work highlighted the importance of clear messaging, visual communication, and user-friendly digital tools in promoting community engagement and knowledge-sharing.

Additional Suggestion: Introducing Indian Cultural

Events As part of my reflections, I would also like to propose an idea that connects cultural heritage with tourism and local development. It would be a matter of great joy for me to organize Indian cultural events such as Ravan Dahan and Holi in Sotenäs kommun and Lysekil, and to lead this project. Just as people make advance bookings for attractions like Liseberg, and visitors come from across the world, similar cultural festivals could attract tourism and generate business opportunities in these municipalities. Organizing such events during periods of seasonal darkness and low business activity could provide both economic benefits and social enrichment, strengthening community integration while diversifying the cultural calendar. This suggestion aligns with the SIRR project's goals of innovation, resilience, and sustainability, by introducing new forms of cultural tourism that can support local businesses and foster international exchange.

Planning Support for Hub Development

As part of the hub development process, I contributed to drafting thematic outlines for potential SIRR hub activities. These themes included green tourism, circular economy practices, youth engagement strategies, and energy efficiency initiatives. The goal was to create a flexible framework that municipalities could adapt to their specific needs and resources. By integrating local knowledge with best practices from other European coastal regions, the hubs aim to foster innovation, strengthen resilience, and support sustainable economic development.

Page 10. My methodology combined qualitative and quantitative approaches. I conducted document reviews of municipal housing strategies, land-use plans, and tourism policies. I analyzed academic literature on rural migration and second-home dynamics. Stakeholder

mapping involved interviews, spreadsheet categorization, and thematic analysis. I also performed comparative research on coastal municipalities in France, Germany, and Denmark to identify relevant policy models. Throughout the internship, I maintained reflective notes and diaries to track insights, challenges, and emerging themes. This structured approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the issues and informed the development of practical recommendations.

Findings: Challenges in Sotenäs and Lysekil

The research revealed several interconnected challenges. Housing pressure is a major concern, with second-home ownership reducing affordability for local residents. Seasonal population surges strain healthcare, waste management, and transportation systems. Municipalities face a tax revenue gap because part-time residents contribute less financially despite using local services. Youth migration weakens the labour market and reduces community vitality. Social fragmentation between permanent and seasonal residents further complicates long-term planning and community integration. These findings underscore the need for holistic, multi-level strategies to support sustainable development.

Quantitative Graph Analysis

The fictional graph on housing prices and seasonal population trends in Sotenäs (2018–2023) illustrates two parallel upward trends. Housing prices increased from 2.1 million SEK to 3.7 million SEK, driven by demand from urban buyers and second-home owners. Seasonal population rose from 8,000 to 15,000, with a notable spike during the COVID-19 pandemic. These trends highlight the dual impact of seasonal residency: rising property prices reduce affordability for locals, while increased visitor numbers intensify pressure on municipal services. The analysis supports the need for policy interventions such as usage-based fees, part-time resident registration, and shared tax contribution systems.

Solutions and Recommendations

Based on the findings, several solutions are recommended. Seasonal residency taxes, similar to the French model, could help municipalities capture additional revenue. Mandatory registration systems, as used in Germany, would improve service planning. Denmark's restrictions on speculative second-home purchases offer a model for protecting local housing markets. Community integration programs, such as NAMASTE STHLM and cultural festivals like Holi and Ravan Dahan, can strengthen social cohesion. Youth-focused initiatives, including skill development programs and entrepreneurship support, are essential for retaining younger populations and revitalizing local labour markets.

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Introducing Indian Cultural Events: As part of my reflections, I propose organizing winter wonderland with music with activities in Sotenäs and Lysekil. These events can attract tourism during low-activity seasons, generate economic opportunities, and promote cultural exchange. By diversifying the cultural calendar, municipalities can strengthen community integration and support local businesses. This aligns with the SIRR project's goals of innovation, resilience, and sustainability.

Conclusion my internship

It provided valuable insights into the structural and social challenges faced by rural coastal municipalities. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, I developed a nuanced understanding of how tourism, housing dynamics, and demographic trends shape local sustainability. The SIRR hubs represent a promising model for fostering innovation, strengthening cooperation, and building resilience. This experience enhanced my analytical, communication, and project management skills, and deepened my commitment to supporting sustainable rural development.

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