Tourism's role in rural development of Finnish Lapland: interpreting national and regional strategy documents

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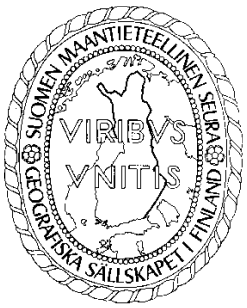

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Rural communities in sparsely populated areas are facing considerable social changes as a result of depopulation and the introduction of new forms of livelihood and working practices. The communities also have to deal with environmental changes caused by the increase in the use of natural resources and by global issues, such as climate change. Anticipation and adaptation, as well as active participation, are important strategies for local communities. Strategic development work is part of the planning system at many geographical levels. This article asks how strategy documents take into account future prospects for tourism development. The objective is to examine how changes in operating environments, land-use patterns, and in the nature-based industries of local rural communities, are taken into account in the "development speech" of tourism strategies. The relationship between tourism strategies and other rural strategies is also briefly addressed. The grass-root level of local communities is introduced by analysing the group discussions held at the village of Lokka in Finnish Lapland. Textual analysis is carried out by using content analysis and rhetorical analysis. The results show that an increase in tourism is regarded as inevitable and that tourism development is often discussed separately from other realms of rural life, even though different rural livelihoods are in many ways strongly interconnected.

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Introduction

In regional development, tourism is often seen as a mechanism for the economic survival of peripheral communities (Knowd 2000; Nash & Martin 2003; Saarinen 2004, 2007), and this is also the policy target in Finland at both the national and regional levels. However, the benefits of the growth of tourism are seldom questioned in policy documents.

Drastic structural changes in the labour markets highlight the need to study future scenarios and policies more thoroughly; this is especially the case in relatively remote areas such as Finnish Lapland. Employment in primary production in this region has decreased from over 30,000 employees in the 1960s to slightly more than 4000 employees at the turn of the millennium and, nowadays, the largest sector in the livelihood structure of Finnish Lapland is the service industry (Regional Council of Lapland 2002). Changes in livelihood structure are impacting every field of life. The transition from traditional, self-sustaining livelihoods to the modern-day market economy, and especially to the generation of services and experiences, has meant both economical and cultural changes for individuals and local communities.

Tourism has been the focus of development in Finnish Lapland since the 1980s. The key statistics on tourism show that tourism has a significant direct effect on incomes and employment in the region. In 2006, direct income from tourism in Lapland was approximately 500 million euros, the increase over the year 2000 being 176 million euros. Direct tourism-based employment in Lapland was equivalent to at least 5000 person-years, and it has increased by 1770 person-years since the year 2000 (Table 1). However, there are consider-

Table 1. Some statistics regarding tourism in Finnish Lapland (Regional Council of Lapland 2008; Statistics Finland 2008).

	2000	2006
Direct tourism income	324 million euros	500 million euros
Direct tourism employment	3,230 person-years	5,000 person-years
Number of registered overnights	1,690,000	2,117,000
– number of overnights by foreigners	539,435	826,000

able differences within the province; e.g. 86 per cent of the overnights were registered in the five largest tourist resorts (Table 2).

The tourism strategy for Finnish Lapland for the period 2003–2006 has adopted a region-oriented development approach, and fell resorts is seen as engines for development. It is argued in the strategy that channelling public support to the resorts is the most effective way to enhance tourism. The smaller, quieter places and villages outside the tourist resorts are regarded as suitable alternatives for widening the diversity of tourism in the region (LTS 2003: 32). Tourism in Lapland has, according to all the relevant indicators (Table 1), increased and the Lapland Tourism Strategy 2007–2010 continues to emphasize the role of the tourist resorts (Fig. 1) as engines of development. However, a lot of work is still required to spread the benefits of resort-oriented tourism. According to Pekka Kauppila (2004), the positive effects have not extended into the areas surrounding the resorts. This is a major challenge for developers and it can also be a question of life and death for small villages. There are considerable possibilities, but also many prob-

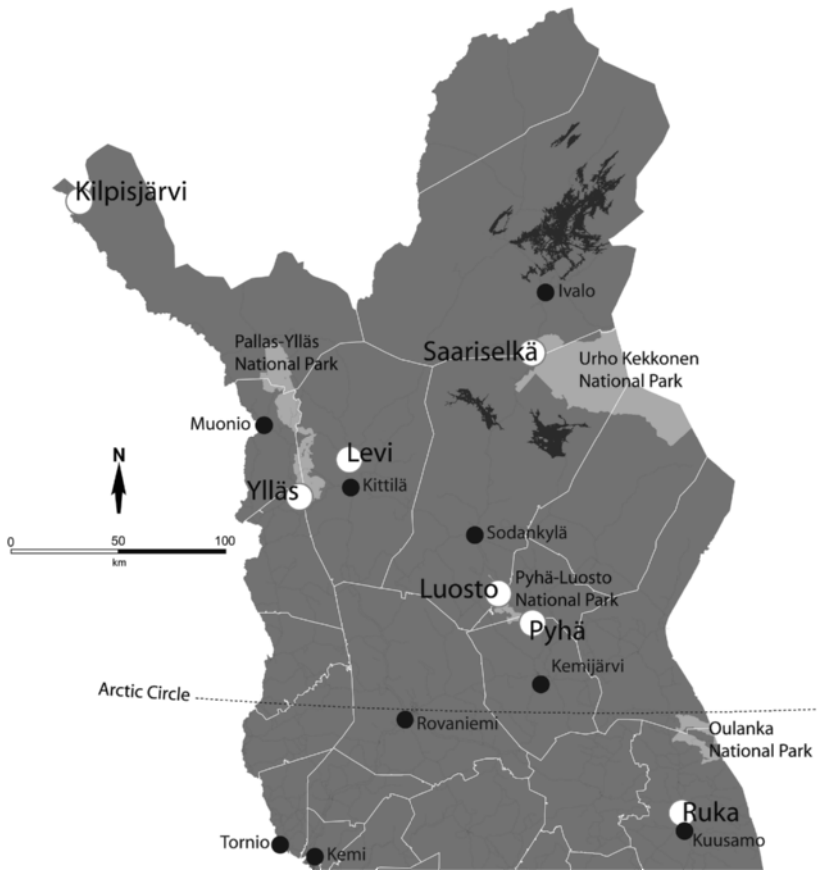

Fig. 1 Main ski resorts (white circles) in Finnish Lapland. Pale grey shading denotes national parks, white lines are commune borders, grey circles are main settlements and grey lines indicate road network, rivers and other water bodies.

Table 2. Number of overnight stays per tourist resort in Finnish Lapland in 2006.

Tourist resort	Registered overnight stays in 2006
Rovaniemi	441,000
Levi	297,000
Ylläs	282,000
Saariselkä	275,000
Pyhä-Luosto	158,000

lems involved in combining traditional nature-based work with the sort of "new work" associated with the field of tourism (see e.g. Müller & Jansson 2007: 12). The social and cultural characteristics of small villages in remote areas need to be taken into account when promoting tourism work as a solution to the employment problems in peripheral areas.

Tourism is often seen by governments as a mechanism for implementing their redistribution policy. However, the local residents will gain unequally, if they gain at all, and for some may even be harmed (Hall & Jenkins 1998: 36). In the present paper, the tourism development and rural strategy documents are analysed in order to determine how they deal with issues concerning nature and rural environment, and how they anticipate changes in their operating environment. The first objective is to examine the role of rural environments, especially the role of forests, which cover most of the land and are intensively utilized by different livelihoods, in the tourism strategies of Finland as a whole and of Finnish Lapland, and the second is to investigate how changes in issues concerning livelihoods and the natural environment are anticipated. The third objective is to elucidate what kind of rural society the documents discursively construct, and how these viewpoints fit in with the needs and expectations of local communities.

Strategies as social facts: the importance of the audience

Documents such as tourism strategies are 'social facts' in that they are produced, shared, and used in socially organized ways. They are not, however, transparent representations of organizational routines, decision-making processes or professional diagnoses. They constitute specific types of representation that apply their own conventions. Documents are often used to create a certain kind of predictability and uniformity out of a wide variety of events and social arrangements, and thus they do not simply describe classes and systems, but are actually active in creating and shaping them. This view is close to the social constructionist idea of society as a human product, in the sense that textual products can be seen as actions that change the world and consist of many kinds of choice (Berger & Luckmann 1967; Atkinson & Coffey 2004).

Transparency may not be possible in strategy documents, but it is important to recognize the power of such documents. The aim in the documents is to try to make them as legitimate and representative as possible. Documents need to be analysed, as their basic feature is that they conceal the work of an individual actor. Their very anonymity is part of the official production of documentary reality. Thus, analysis is needed to show what kinds of choice have been made and how the documents claim whatever authority may be attributed to them. We should ask, what are the premises for the argumentation in the documents and what are the target audiences of the text? Rhetorical analysis is an important method in studying how different versions of reality are made to be convincing, and how readers, listeners or participants can be engaged (Tuulentie 2003; Atkinson & Coffey 2004). For example, the preface to Finland's National Tourism Strategy emphasizes that it has been prepared in close cooperation with "tourism actors" and that the preparation process has included, in addition to the actual working group, some 2000 active participants from various parts of Finland. It also states that the strategy will have a positive impact on economic growth and employment, and on a more equal development of the country's individual regions. Lapland's Tourism Strategy states that "the development of tourism in Lapland is an on-going process, in which actions are based on policies that have been *jointly agreed upon* and regularly revised" (Lapland Tourism Strategy… 2003). These are some of the features that serve to strengthen the legitimacy and relevance of the document. However, it is important to realize that documents do not exist in isolation. Documents refer to other realities and domains, and also to other documents. When analysing documentary reality, one must, therefore, look beyond the individual texts (Atkinson & Coffey 2004).

The rhetorical understanding of communication is based on the principal that any text (oral or written) is produced in a social context in which the roles of the addressor and the addressee can be defined (Summa 1989). Rhetorical analysis can place emphasis on different features in the texts. One of the most influential sub-divisions was made in ancient times by Aristotle. He distinguished between ethos, pathos, and logos, meaning the traits that are related to the speaker, those related to the audience, and those related to the argument itself. The ideas of new rhetoric (Perelman 1982; Summa 1989) emphasize especially the meaning of the audience and the fact that arguments are always addressed to an audience. This does not refer to an audience that is physically present, nor does it mean an audience that is expressly addressed, but an audience that is the gathering of those, who the speaker wants to influence through his or her arguments (Perelman 1982: 14). Furthermore, the premises of argumentation have to be shared with the audience. This is achieved, for example, through the general nature of argumentation: it is easier to gain broad acceptance for something that is generally considered to be a good thing, such as health, than for something that is based on a very detailed and concrete argument (Perelman 1982: 27–32). If this acceptance is gained at the general level, it is possible to transfer it to more concrete issues. For example, because cancer is regarded as a bad thing, it is possible to use cancer as a metaphor for some social phenomenon in order to make it look like a problem. Thirdly, argumentation always uses natural language, and thus it is inevitably ambiguous by nature. The analysis should both examine the text as a whole and also reveal the choices made using specific linguistic means.

In this article, we focus primarily on the issue of audiences: at whom the documentary texts are addressed and in what ways do they communicate with different audiences. In the beginning of our analysis, however, we made a quantitative content analysis of the texts. To summarise the information on selected issues in the documents, we calculated the number of references to different concepts in six documents (Table 3). However, rural strategies were dealt with only when they referred to the totality of livelihoods in rural districts.

In addition, the Draft for Lapland Tourism Strategy 2007–2010 (LTS 2007a) was discussed in a focus group comprising the inhabitants of a small village, Lokka, in Eastern Lapland. The transcript of this discussion was also analysed and compared to the contents of the regional strategy.

Results of the documentary analysis

The validity of all the documents is based on the declaration that a large number of parties were involved in the preparatory process. The audiences can be regarded as the "nation" or "region" for which the strategy demonstrates that tourism is an important part of the economic life. The documents also include the statement that the purpose is to appeal to the financiers (FTS 2006).

When conducting a textual analysis, it is not only important what has been written, but also to recognise what is not expressed. Thus, our first questions are: What is taken for granted in the documents? What are the underlying assumptions that do not even have to be indicated? One common feature in tourism strategy documents is that the growth of tourism is seen as the only possibility. The documents do not include any scenarios

Table 3. Document data: strategies and abbreviations used in the tables of this study.

Strategy	Abbreviation
1. Finland's Tourism Strategy to 2020 (Ministry of Trade and Industry)	FTS
2. Lapland Tourism Strategy 2003–2006*	LTS1
3. Draft for Lapland Tourism Strategy 2007–2010*	DLTS2
4. Lapland Tourism Strategy 2007–2010*	LTS2
5. Development Strategy for Finnish Rural Areas (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)	NRS
6. Lapland's Rural Programme 2013*	LRS

*Strategies 2, 3, 4 and 6 formulated by the Regional Council of Lapland.

that address declining tourism. Expressions like "tourism brings well-being to all of Lapland and furthers regionally-balanced development" is taken as the main vision of the Lapland Strategy (LTS 2003). This also applies to Finland's Strategy (FTS 2006): "Tourism is a significant source of employment and prosperity, which will help Finland's economy grow further, and it is also of regional significance as a source of livelihood." However, the national strategy is more cautious in its anticipation and provides a list of tasks that have to be fulfilled in order to realize this kind of development. Both the national (FTS 2006) and the Lapland Tourism Strategies (LTS 2007a,b) present the positive impacts of tourism on regional development in a powerfully emphasized manner, and tourism is regarded as a blessing for remote and peripheral areas.

The natural environment

Nature is regarded as one of the main attractions in Finland, and especially in Lapland. Nature as such is frequently mentioned in the strategies – in the national strategy 61 times and in the regional strategies about 50 times in each text (Table 4). However, what is meant by "nature" remains somewhat open. Nature is related to such adjectives as *clean*, *varied*, *silent* and *peaceful*. In the Lapland Strategy the adjectives "Arctic" and "northern" are often related to nature. Cleanness is the feature most strongly emphasized in both the national and regional strategies. Nature-based activities are regarded as an important development branch in tourism.

From the point of view of rhetoric, "nature" is a useful concept: there is such a universal agreement that nature is good and is a thing that tourists look for, that the different actors can agree on the idea that clean, unique nature is what Finland – and especially Lapland – can offer to tourists (cf. Perelman 1982: 27 about universal values). However, when it comes to the question of "real" nature and its features, it is not so easy to write about it. National parks are mentioned in both the national and regional tourism strategies, and they can be seen as referring to the sort of natural environment that will continue in the future in the form that it is in now. In Finland, and also in international marketing, Lapland with its many large national parks represents "high nature" and an exotic resource for tourism, whereas in Finland's Tourism Strategy (FTS 2006) Lapland receives little mention.

One important aspect of Finnish nature, the country's forests, are mentioned only a couple of times in each strategy. This is especially interesting because tourism entrepreneurs in Lapland have recently demanded that the forests in certain areas should not be used for forestry, but should instead be set aside for tourism and outdoor recreation use (e.g. Mäkinen 2006). The use and the nature of forests thus seem to be a contested issue, and one that is conveniently avoided in the strategy documents. However, there are some signs that the forestry issue is also entering the strategy speech: Lapland's Second Tourism Strategy deals with the more contested forestry issues and refers to the possibility of the trade in natural values (LTS 2007b).

The Lapland Tourism Strategy 2003–2006 (LTS 2003) mentions forests only a few times, but the concept of wilderness is frequently used and can be regarded as including forests, its main function being as a more attractive and romantic as word for this type of natural surrounding. "Vast" and "clean" are adjectives used together with wilderness (LTS 2003, English version). Somehow, however, the word "wilderness" has vanished from the latest version of the Lapland Tourism Strategy. Nor does it appear in Finland's Tourism Strategy. This may be due to the fact that the official wilderness nature protection areas were established in northern Lapland in 1991 (Erämaalaki 17.1.1991/62), and they were more actively discussed at the time when the first Lapland Tourism Strategy was formulated.

Table 4. Nature and nature-use related concepts plus their frequencies in the strategies. For abbreviations, refer to Table 3.

Strategy	FTS	LTS1	DLTS2	LTS2
Nature	61	48	23	49
Wilderness	–	11	–	–
Forest	2	1	3	3
Scenery	8	13	5	7
Natural value trade	–	–	1	1
National park	4	16	18	20
Protected area	2	6	7	7

Wholeness of rural society

In this study we consider the rural strategies from the point of view of the whole rural society. We

ask to what extent these strategies represent the whole range of livelihoods and relationships between the different spheres of rural life. Peripheral areas receive attention in the strategies. The national tourism strategy states that "The strategy has a clearly positive effect on economic growth and employment, and it also furthers a more balanced development in the different areas. Tourism is in a central role in the economies of the remote areas, and the positive impacts of the strategy are emphasized especially in the sparsely populated areas of Northern and Eastern Finland and in tourist resorts with a capacity for growth in Northern Finland and Pohjois-Pohjanmaa."

The idea of development in the tourism strategies has parallels with to Peter Burns's (1999: 330) division between the attitudes "tourism first" and "development first". According to Burns, the approach "tourism first" with its focus on development is totally directed at tourism, while the approach "development first" sees tourism only as a tool for national and regional development. Some references to the approach "development first" can be seen in the opening paragraphs of the strategies (in the first chapters of Finland's Tourism Strategy to 2020 and Lapland Tourism Strategy 2003–2006, and in the second chapter of Lapland Tourism Strategy 2007–2010), where tourism is seen as a mechanism for economic welfare in rural areas. Subsequently, however, the tourism strategies rely more and more on the "tourism first" approach. The tourism strategy documents almost completely offer hardly any methods or tools for promoting tourism in the areas around tourist resorts. The framework of development and references to cooperation also focus on tourism stakeholders. Rural strategies include more plans and tools for the integrated development of the different sectors. This also reflects differences in the strategies' target audiences. Tourism strategies put tourism developers first, while rural strategies strive for broader local development.

The essence of how rural areas are represented in the documents can be summed up in the idea that depopulation of the countryside is a problem and tourism is a saver as most of the tourist destinations are situated in the rural areas (FTS 2006). Finland's national tourism strategy is almost devoid of discussion about other rural livelihoods and their relationship to tourism (Table 5). The only exception is one figure in which agriculture and forestry are mentioned as parts of a broader frame of tourism. Fishery and reindeer herding are not at all included in the frame.

The Lapland Tourism Strategy 2003–2006 (LTS 2003) addresses traditional livelihoods and their relationships to tourism in more length (Table 5). The two-way interaction is also recognised: *tourism creates opportunities for other industries, but at the same time it is strongly dependent on them* (LTS 2003: 6). Planning processes are regarded as a forum for reconciling the interests of different rural livelihoods. More intensive dialogue is also demanded to advance the diverse use of forest and water resources. Almost all of the discussions about the relationships between different rural livelihoods have been omitted from the latest version of the strategy (LTS 2007b). Traditional livelihoods receive much less attention. It simply states that the interests of reindeer herding, mining, and

Table 5. Number of references to different forms of livelihood in the strategies. For abbreviations, refer to Table 3.

Strategy	FTS	LTS1	DLTS2	LTS2	NRS	LRS
Tourism (in rural strategies)					7*	165*
Collaboration between the tourism industry and other livelihoods	2	2	3	3	–	16
Tourism industry's dependence on other livelihoods	–	2	1	–		
Traditional livelihoods	–	3	–	1	–	9
Reindeer herding	–	3	–	2	1	72
– all aspects regarding reindeer	–	9	4	8	–	118
Fishery (industry)	–	4	–	1	4	37
Agriculture	1	–	–	1	207	48
Forestry	–	2	3	4	43	34
– forest sector	1	–	–		2	1

*These figures contain all references to tourism, not only to the tourism industry.

forestry can be the opposite to those of tourism, but that a balance between these interests can be reached through proper land-use management policy. As regards forestry, however, the trade in recreational and scenic values is mentioned as a new idea. With respect to the basic tourism attractions in Lapland, it is striking that the Draft of Lapland Tourism Strategy 2007–2010 (LTS 2007a) does not mention reindeer herding at all. After circulation for comments, reindeer herding gained slightly more attention in the final document (LTS 2007b).

Lapland Tourism Strategy 2003–2006 (LTS 2003) points out that tourism development should focus on tourist resorts. This same policy target is confirmed in the Finland's Tourism Strategy to 2020 (FTS 2006) and in the latest Lapland Tourism Strategy 2007–2010 (LTS 2007b). Quite the contrary, Finland's Rural Development Strategy for 2007–2013 (FRDS 2007), does not discuss the role of tourist resorts at all, but the rural strategy of Lapland, Lapland's rural programme 2013 (LRP 2005), takes the same point of view as the regional tourist strategies. Since the emphasis is on tourist centers, the basic residential units in Lapland, villages and small communities, become almost invisible. Nevertheless, almost all the tourist resorts in Lapland have evolved around old villages, which still have their traditional population and lifestyles.

Local communities are often regarded as an essential part of rural areas, and a strong sense of communality tied to a sense of place is emphasised (e.g. Holmila 2001). Moreover, the concepts of local and localness have been regarded as important in the field of tourism: tourists are expected to be interested in local culture and to have interaction with the locals (Smith 1978). Thus, it is interesting to note how rural communities and their interaction with tourists are addressed in strategy documents. In rural strategies, the traditional rural issues are discussed a lot, while community and communality issues are not so popular (Table 6). Localness receives some more attention in tourism strategies. Localness is also viewed from different directions: the main issues are 1) how the local population benefits from tourism and 2) how to use local culture as tourism attraction (LTS 2003). However, these points of views are only mentioned, not developed in any concrete way. The difference between the Lapland Tourism Strategies and Finland's Tourism Strategy is in the emphasis placed on the local population: Finland's Tourism Strategy to 2020 (FTS 2006) has stronger demands with more numerous mentions that the local populations must be involved in planning and that this must be taken into account in every decision. This is also the official goal of recent planning policies (see Jauhiainen & Niemenmaa 2006).

Anticipation of changes

Being *strategy* devices for the future of a livelihood, it is to be expected that the anticipation of changes in an operating environment is important. Indeed, each of the documents includes a chapter on anticipation (Table 7).

The anticipation of possible changes such as climate change is an interesting topic since it is dealt with very differently in the Finland's Tourism Strategy (FTS 2006) and in the Lapland Tourism Strategy (LTS 2007b). In the former, climate change is a part of a long list demonstrating the threats to the

Table 6. Number of references to concepts related to tourist destinations and traditional rural life. For abbreviations, refer to Table 3.

Strategy	FTS	LTS1	DLTS2	LTS2	NRS	LRS
Tourist destination	56	93	95	106	–	14
– ski resort	1	6	9	8	–	–
– fell resort	–	7	4	6	–	2
Rural	5	1	7	8		
Community	–	–	–	–	2	13
Local community	–	1	–	–	1	–
Communality	4	–	–	–	10	6
Local	24	14	3	9	48	45
Village	–	2	4	7	13	66

Table 7. Number of references to concepts related to the anticipation of changes. For abbreviations, refer to Table 3.

Strategy	FTS	LTS1	DLTS2	LTS2	NRS	LRS
Climate change	11	–	12	16	8	–
– negative	2	–	2	3*	1	
– positive	–	–	8	9	–	
– neutral	9	–	2	4	7**	
Sustainability	30	19	6	21	21	14
Safety, security	38	27	22	43		

*Two negative mentions indicate impacts on regions other than Lapland, but these are also transformed to the benefit of Lapland later on in the document.
**Four mentions address prevention or mitigation (slowing down) of climate change in a neutral manner.

tourism industry. In the latter, climate change is mainly understood as a positive factor, although the problems for Southern Lapland are mentioned. The final version of the Lapland Tourism Strategy 2007–2010 (LTS 2007b) mentions climate change sixteen times, and in nine of these the message is that climate change will benefit tourism in Lapland. Three of the mentions see climate change as a possible threat (for tourism in Southern Lapland), and the rest are more or less neutral.

The ideal of sustainability is firmly integrated into the tourism strategies. Sustainability, sustainable development, and sustainable tourism are often mentioned and their principles are explained in chapters dedicated to this topic (LTS 2003; FTS 2006; LTS 2007b). Sustainability was almost omitted from the latest Lapland Tourism Strategy: the draft version (LTS 2007a) had only six mentions and they were mainly related to ecological issues. However, the final version of the strategy (LTS 2007b) increased the number of mentions to the level of the previous strategy. Also, an entire chapter dedicated only to sustainability was reinstated in the text. This shows how easily a text can address only a specific audience in a certain sector of life, whereas in actual fact the audience is usually far wider. A broader perspective was reinstated in the second Lapland Tourism Strategy in the course of circulating the draft version among stakeholders.

Sustainability and sustainable development are dealt with in the form of generalities with little concrete content. They are used in a very flexible manner to justify a wide range of issues. For example, the Lapland Tourism strategy 2007–2010 states that (LTS 2007b: 20) "sustainable development is powerfully present in tourism in Eastern Lapland because of regional planning and the awarding of the international Pan Parks certificate." Here sustainable development is understood in a very narrow sense only in relation to national parks. To define sustainability in this way in a region that suffers from many drastic societal, economic, and ecological changes, and a lack of tourism investments compared to other parts of Lapland, diminishes the argumentative power of sustainability. In general, despite all the research done around these concepts, the use of the term sustainability and its different versions seems to remain at the level of abstract values, e.g. beauty or justice, but not as concrete values belonging to a specific being, object, or group (cf. Perelman 1982: 27).

One often-expressed concern regarding remote regions is related to migration and the population age structure. This issue of demographic changes in rural areas is briefly dealt with in the national tourism strategy. The effects of growing tourism are mainly regarded simply as being positive, but there is also a mention that negotiations with local people are needed. The problem of population age structure in rural areas is not dealt with in the national tourism strategy at all, and the Lapland Tourism Strategy (LTS 2003) regards the consequences of ageing in a positive light in the sense that well-off seniors need more tourism services.

Demographic changes in rural areas are dealt with briefly in Finland's Tourism Strategy. Issues such as safety, terrorism, and crime are listed both in Finland's Tourism Strategy and in the Lapland Tourism Strategy as threats, and their being absent as advantages for Finland as a whole and for Lapland as a region.

Regional strategy from the point of view of a small, remote village

Local points of view in "development speech" were discussed in the course of one village meeting held in Finnish Lapland. Five villagers read the draft of the new regional strategy and we then held a focus group discussion with the readers about the villagers' points of view regarding the draft. A memo of the discussion was drawn up as an official comment on the draft. The statement represented the only comment on the draft made by a village. The focus group was part of the action research process, which was launched in the spring of 2007 at the village of Lokka. The aim of this action research process is to make certain working-life-related, everyday practices, problems, and possibilities visible to the local people themselves (Hakkarainen 2007).

The village of Lokka is located in central Lapland, in the municipality of Sodankylä. This remote village lies on the shore of Finland's largest hydroelectric reservoir. Sompio, the wilderness area around Lokka, has strong cultural-historical significance for the local people, as well as for the larger national audience. The demise of the previous self-sufficient economy in Lokka is linked to the overall structural changes in society, and in the local context it is closely linked to the construction of the Lokka hydroelectric reservoir in 1967, which resulted in the permanent flooding of most of Sompio. In addition, the reservoir resulted in drastic changes in the physical environment of Sompio and in livelihoods such as reindeer herding and farming because the pastures were covered by the water. As devastating as the reservoir has been, it has since proved to be an excellent fishing area, and fishing is nowadays one of the main livelihoods in Lokka. During the past few years, the local people have developed tourism activities and they have plans to consolidate tourism as one of their livelihoods. (Lokan kylä 2007).

The focus group meeting at which the Lapland Tourism Strategy was discussed (2.4.2007) was one of the meetings and workshops arranged during the course of the action research process. The meeting began with a discussion about depopulation, and the villagers expressed their concern for the future of the village in the face of the declining birth rate. The villagers' main and most striking comment regarding the draft version was that remote villages are invisible in the strategy. However, they did accept this because the strategy was regarded as being directed at the entire region of Lapland. On the same grounds, the emphasis on tourist resorts was accepted. The villagers discussed a lot about the relationships between the villages and rural areas and tourist resorts. One unanswered question highlighted the possibilities of rural areas as a whole – and especially their own village – with respect to linking up with the nearby resorts' business environment? The draft did not appear to address this issue.

Nevertheless, the villagers wished that the tourist centres would assume responsibility for the development of the surrounding countryside. They assumed that the regional strategy is more beneficial to tourist resorts and national-level organisations. The villagers could benefit more if the nearby resorts would draw up plans that take into account the surrounding countryside, including its villages. In its present state, the village of Lokka is directly included only in the Livelihood Policy Programme of Sodankylä municipality.

One concrete example of the action research project during the strategy formulation is related to the accessibility of this particular village. At present, there is only one road leading to the village of Lokka, which means that tourists must drive 80 kilometres from the main road to find the village. One important project for the villagers is to get a more direct, shorter connection to the main road, but this was not included in the draft of the Lapland Tourism Strategy. After circulation of the draft for comments, the road is now mentioned as one important issue for tourism development (LTS 2007b).

The villagers' viewpoints differed in many ways from the "official" strategy thinking. For example, the way Lapland was divided into tourism areas in the draft was regarded as artificial, and the villagers recognised that this division was based on the needs of the tourist resorts and of the outside planners.

For the villagers, demographic change in the countryside was a far more important issue than climate change. The villagers commented on climate change by saying that "the Lokka reservoir will lose its cover of ice sometime between mid-May and mid-June – and then life will go on."

Conclusions

This article examines the way strategic tourism planning communicates: Who says what to whom?

The overall conclusion is that tourism strategies create a relatively closed speech community. The strategies construct their own tourism reality with hardly any discussion on larger societal systems and other fields of life, and the argumentation follows strictly the logic of the livelihood in question. The basic premise that tourism is growing and it is the answer to many development problems is hardly questioned. Especially in a peripheral region, such as Lapland, tourism strategies appear to be strongly confirming the position of tourism. These regional tourism strategies can be seen as the tourism industry's argumentation for tourism. The other possibility could be that different, and even unexpected, scenarios should be anticipated, and that the wider framework of regional development should be taken more into account.

The abstractness of the wording is one feature typical of the language of planning – this resembles what Summa (1989) has called an institutionalized argumentative strategy in which all the generative potentiality of rhetoric has disappeared and turned argumentation into a ritualistic exchange of meaningless statements. This is especially apparent in issues such as "nature" and "sustainability" where they remain almost totally at the level of abstract values.

The language of strategic planning makes it difficult for ordinary people to become involved in the process. Participation requires especially the capability to use the same discourse as planners do (Staffans 2002). In the case of tourism strategies, the villagers of Lokka could not find any clue as to how they could participate in tourism development – although they were very willing to do so. From the rural population's point of view, tourism is important, but at the grass-root level it is usually connected to other rural livelihoods and practices. Thus, the totality of the living environment and livelihoods is more important than the strategies that deal with individual livelihoods.

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