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Interactive and Participatory Forest Planning in Koli Case Study Area

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1 Introduction

ELAV - Enhancing Local Activity and Values from forest land through community-led strategic planning - is an international project, the central aim of which is to develop methods for involving local communities in forest planning at strategic level. The lead partner of the ELAV project is Swedish Forest Agency and 15 other partners from Finland, Iceland, Norway, Scotland and Sweden take part in the project. Each country participating in the project has its own case study area. The experiences got from the study areas are shared during the project and these experiences are used for the development of new methods. The project started in 2005 and it will last until the end of the year 2007. The project is partly funded by Interreg IIB Northern Periphery Programme.

The main aims of the ELAV project in Finland are to develop interactive methods and new procedures for forest planning and to prepare a local forestry programme in the area of Koli and Hattusaari. Finnish partners in the project are Finnish Forest Research Institute (Metla), Regional Forestry Centre Northern Karelia and Forest Management Association Northern Karelia.

2 Description of the case study area of Finland

The case study area of Finland is Koli and Hattusaari, which is located in the Eastern Finland, in the province of Northern Karelia. The study area covers the areas in the western coast of Lake Pielinen, which belongs to the municipality of Lieksa. There are about 250 private forest owners in this area. In the area the most important sources of livelihood are tourism and agriculture. Finnish Forest Research Institute and Hotel Koli are large single employers. E.g. Koli national park and down hill skiing possibilities draw tourists to Koli. Over 100 000 people visit in Koli yearly (Metsäntutkimuslaitos...2005, Puhakka 2005).

The area of Koli and Hattusaari was selected for the case study area, because there are remarkable scenic, cultural, recreational and nature values in this area. Therefore, forest owners have more potential to utilise commercially their forests in the production of ecosystem products and services for the welfare of the people.

3 Preparation of local forestry programme

Finnish Forest Research Institute (Metla), Regional Forestry Centre Northern Karelia and Forest Management Association Northern Karelia are preparing the local forestry programme in a close interaction with people living in the area of Koli and Hattusaari. The programme will be carried out for the benefit of the local people, and therefore, it is important, that the local communities have a possibility to affect on the content of the programme.

MELA forest planning system is used by Metla for the analyses of sustainable use and development opportunities of the forests (Figure 1). Multi-source national forest inventory (MNFI) data is used as an input in MELA simulations. MNFI-data consists of the data from the 9th National Forest Inventory and the data from satellite images. The areas of specific interest, e.g. the areas covered by shore plan and component master plan will be defined. The restrictions set for forest management in these areas are taken into account in MELA simulations.

Forestry forum defines the objectives for MELA optimisations. MELA system produces alternative scenarios about the development opportunities of the forests. Forestry forum evaluates these scenarios in meetings and through web services and web pages.

Stand level inventory data is used for the preparation of plans for forestry holdings. The plans made for forestry holdings by Regional Forestry Centre are used e.g. by Forest Management Association, when the joint initiatives and the projects, which promote the development of source of local livelihood based on forests are identified. In addition, the opportunities for financing these projects are determined.

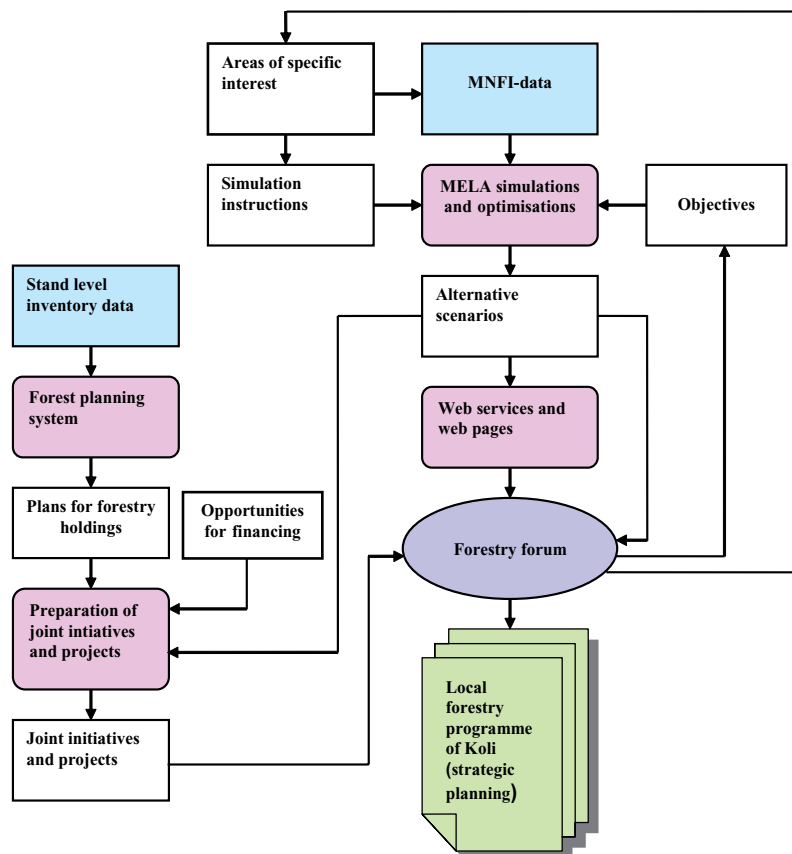


Figure 1. Preparation of local forestry programme for the area of Koli and Hattusaari.

4 Involvement of local people and other interest groups

One aim of the involvement is to gather information about aims and preferences of local people and other interest groups for the use of the forests. Furthermore, the joint initiatives and projects are found out. In the same time as it is gathered information, it is also given information about ELAV project and local forestry programme. Information is also given about forest planning and forest management and the use and the development opportunities of the forests. The purpose is that the people working in ELAV project and the people involved in the process can learn from each other and that the involvement would produce more acceptable and applicable document for the use of local people.

The methods for involving people are represented in Table 1. Information about the ELAV project and local forestry programme is given mainly at public meetings, in media releases, ELAV web sites and leaflet. The working group has a key role in the determination the aims of the management of the forests in the area of Koli and Hattusaari and in the evaluation of different scenarios produced by MELA system.

Table 1. Methods used for involving people in the planning process.

	Letter	Local newspapers	Public meetings	ELAV web site	Leaflet	Media releases	Working group	Telephone	Email
Invitations to the meetings									
Information about the project									
Possibility to contact									
Finding out the aims of interest groups									
Finding out the joint initiatives and projects									
Evaluation of different scenarios									

5 Experiences so far

The experiences about the involvement of the local communities into the process are that the public meetings are a good way to give information, but only very few people take part in the conversation. Better way to gather information and involve people into the planning process is to set up a smaller working group. The problem is that only very active people are interested in taking part in the meetings of the working group. Thus, personal contacts are needed in order to get people to come to the meetings. In that way it is also possible to affect the representativity of the participation.

Web sites are not necessarily a good media to collect information from the people living in countryside. Most of the people, who are living in countryside, do not yet have fast internet connec-

tions or the connections are not used multifunctionally. In addition, the use of the internet may still be expensive. The internet can be one possibility to take part in the planning process, but other options should also be given.

References

Metsäntutkimuslaitos: Tutkimusmetsäpalvelut ja Joensuun tutkimuskeskus 2005. Kolin kansallispuisto 2010. Hoito- ja käyttösuunnitelma 2003-2010. 98 s.

Puhakka, R. 2005. Matkailijoiden käsitys matkailun asemasta kansallispuistossa. Metlan työraportteja 20. 17 s. <http://www.metla.fi/julkaisut/workingpapers/2005/mwp020.htm>.