

Anticipation of changes in rural operating environments: Readings of Finnish rural programmes and tourism strategies

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Rural communities in sparsely populated areas are facing different kinds of changes from the coming of new industries and new modes of work to such big environmental issues as climate change. Anticipation and adaptation as well as active participation are important for local communities. Strategic development work is done in the planning system in many geographical levels. This presentation examines how the changes in operating environments, in land-use patterns and in nature-based industries of local rural communities are taken into account in the “development speech” of rural programmes and tourism strategies. Tourism here represents new kind of industry that is becoming more and more important for the survival of deep countryside and that also carries new attitudes and expectations for land use.

Empirically the presentation is based on the readings of recent national level rural programmes and tourism strategies of Finland and the corresponding regional level documents of one of the most important Finnish tourist region, Lapland. Programmes and strategies that are dealt with are firstly, two national rural policy programmes and national tourism strategy and secondly, rural policy programme and tourism strategy for the province of Lapland. The aim of the reading is to examine how the “development speech” expresses and takes into account possible drastic or slower changes of operating environments in rural communities. Also, it is discussed how the programme and strategy texts enhance active citizenship of local inhabitants of rural communities and use local knowledge in their visions. Readings of the texts are carried out by using the qualitative method of rhetoric analysis.