

ANTICIPATION OF CHANGES IN RURAL OPERATING ENVIRONMENTS

Readings of Finland's and Lapland's tourism strategies

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Changes in rural livelihood structures in Lapland

- Primary production has decreased rapidly
 - from 30 000 employees in the 1960s to 4 000 employees in the 2000s
 - it is estimated that the number of employees will not decrease anymore
- Cultural change:
 - transition from traditional self-sustaining livelihoods to modern market economy
- Focus on (nature-based) tourism development since the 1980s
- Tourism resorts as engines for the development since 2003
- Tourism in Lapland has increased in all common parameters, but positive effects have not yet spread widely to the surroundings of the centers
 - > challenge for the developers, question of life and death for villages

Tourism sector's perspective to rural changes

- Objectives
 - to examine the role of forests and other natural environments in Finland's and Lapland's tourism strategies
 - to evaluate how the changes in climate, demography and livelihoods are anticipated
 - to figure out what kind of rural society the documents are making and how the documents answer to the needs of local communities

Theoretical framework

- Close reading of the tourism strategies:
 - attention to argumentation strategies and rhetorics
 - interpretations by local residents of one village and by the researchers
- Why are the documents produced? How do they legitimate themselves?
- What kind of choices are made in relation to future changes?
- How are the choices justified?
- What kinds of realities they create through the choices?
- An important starting point is that the documents are not only descriptive but they are active in creating and shaping things

The documents & data

- National tourism strategy
 - Finland's tourism strategy up to the year 2020
 - By the Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Regional tourism strategy
 - Lapland's tourism strategy 2003-2006
 - Draft for Lapland's tourism strategy 2007-2010
 - By the Regional Council of Lapland
- Local points of view of regional tourism strategy
 - Based on focus group discussions in a village called Lokka in Lapland

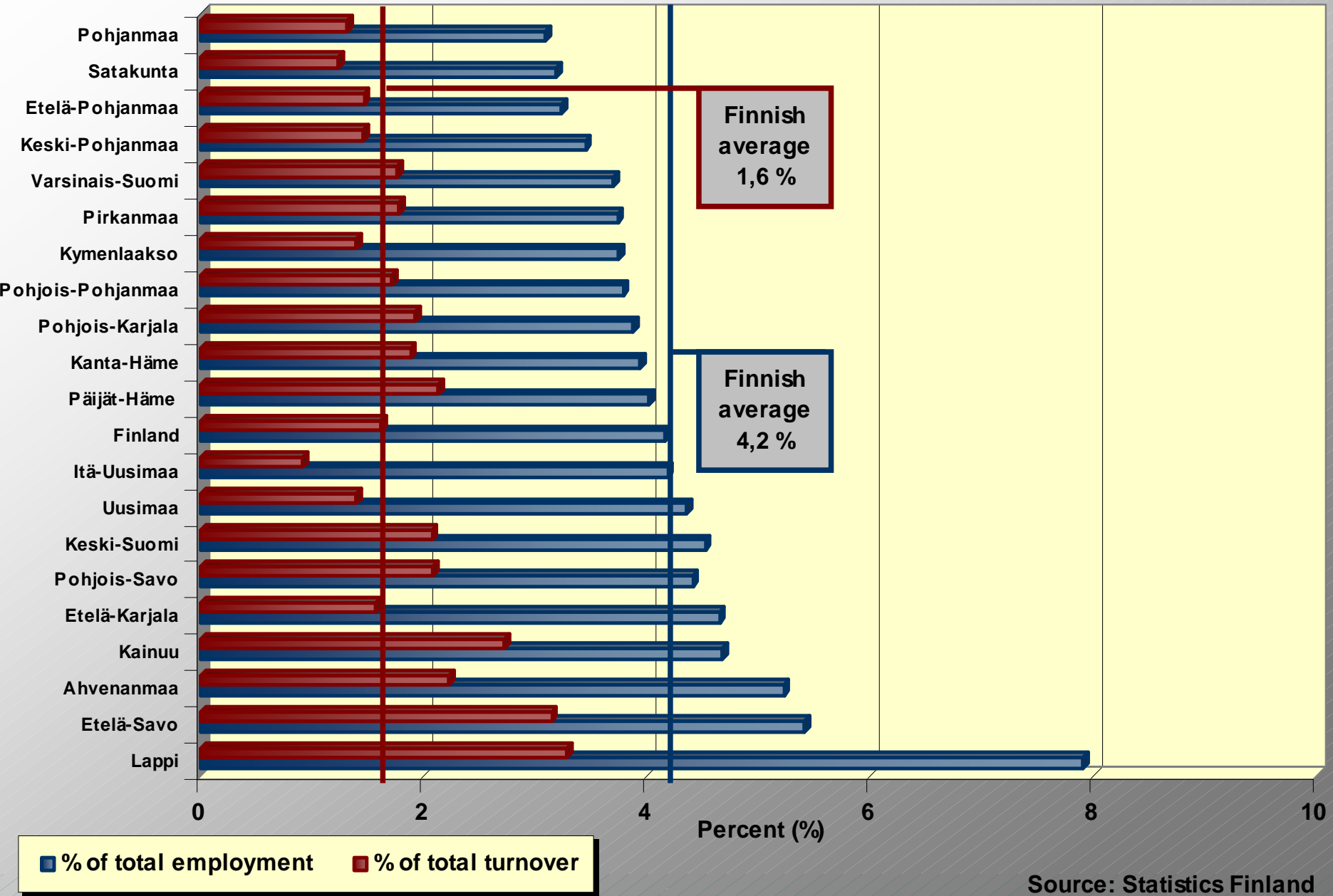
What is taken for granted in the documents?

- In the strategy documents, tourism growth is the only possibility; they do not include scenarios of declining tourism
- Emphasis is on the development of tourism centres
- The importance of nature, is emphasised BUT
 - In the national strategy, forests are mentioned only once as a last element in the list of natural attractions
 - In Lapland tourism strategy, forests are not mentioned at all but the forests are included into the wilderness concept which is used a lot

Rural society in the documents

- National strategy:
 - Depopulation of countryside expressed as a problem
 - Tourism as a saver as most of the tourism destinations are situated in the rural areas
 - No discussion about other rural livelihoods and their relation to tourism – except one figure where agriculture and forestry are mentioned as parts of a broad frame of tourism
 - Fishery and reindeer herding are not included in that frame
- Lapland in national strategy: very few mentions although it is mentioned as in the beginning of the list of key attractions in Finland

The relative significance of restaurant and accommodation business in finnish counties 2003



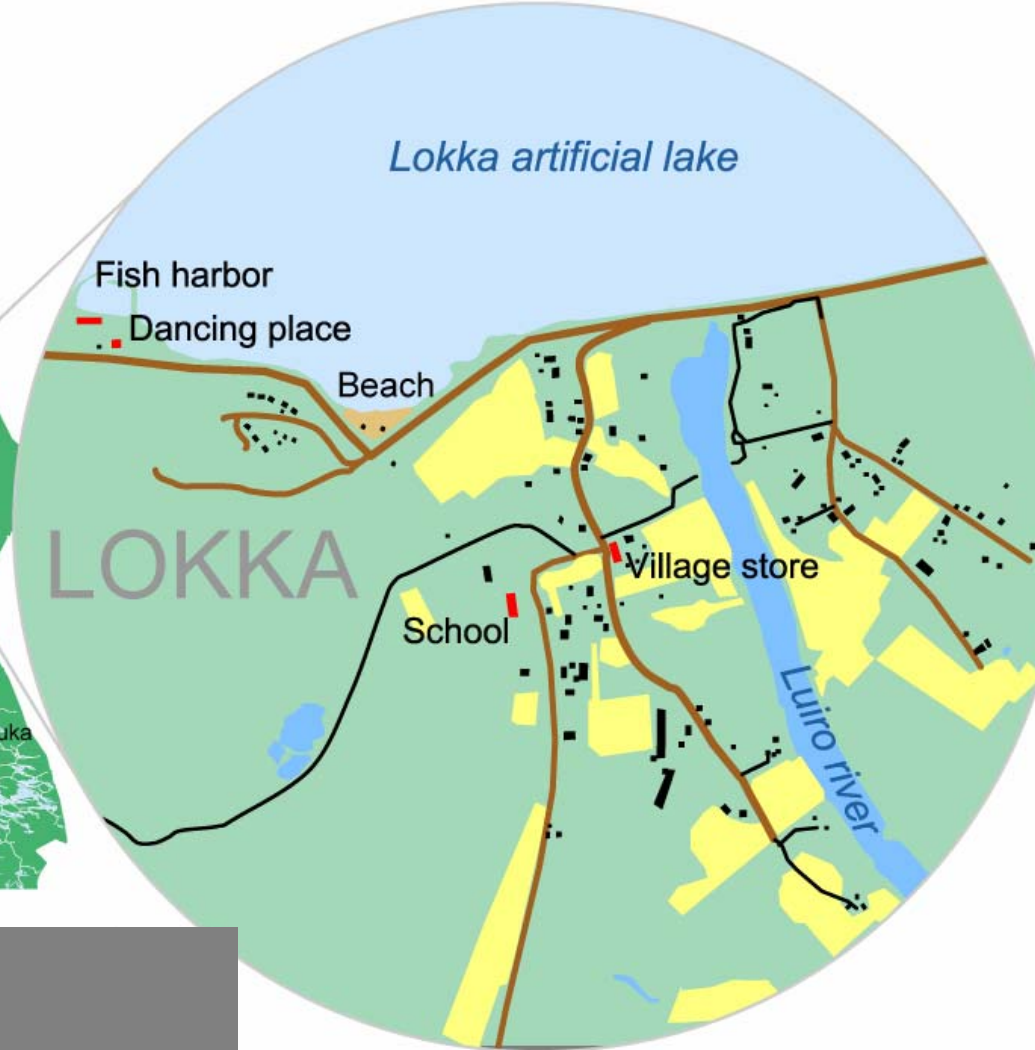
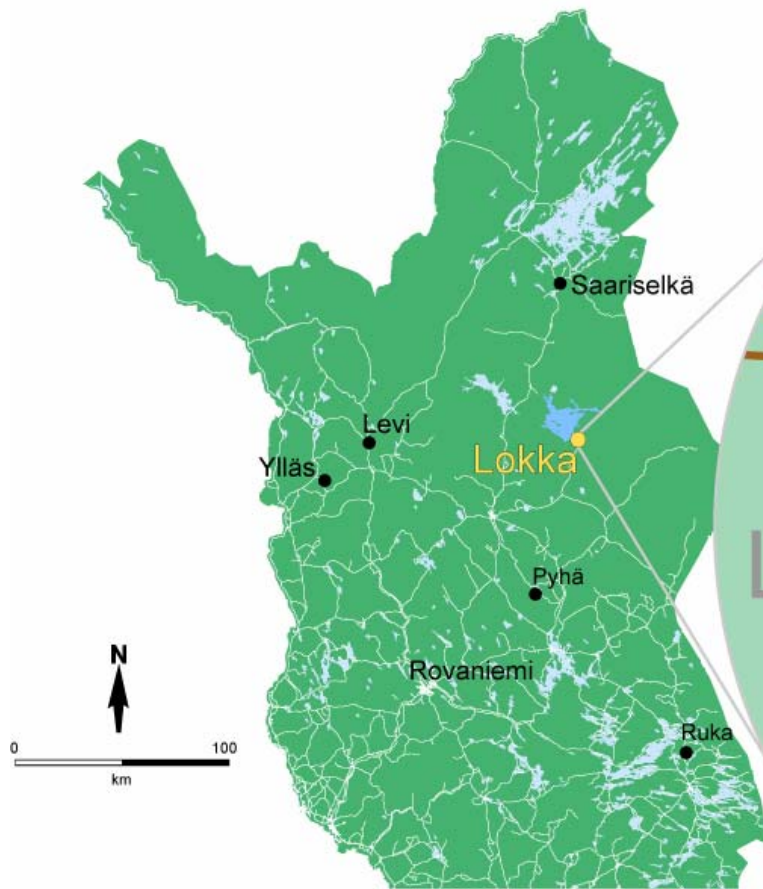
- Regional strategy 2003-2006:
- Traditional livelihoods and their relations to tourism are discussed thoroughly
 - Tourism creates opportunities for other industries but at the same time it is strongly dependent on them. This creates synergic possibilities, for instance, between tourism and traditional industries, such as forest economy, reindeer herding, fishing and the artisan sector.”
 - Also, the tourists’ interest in the authentic culture is regarded as a possibility for reindeer herding
 - Planning processes are regarded as the forum to reconcile the interests of different rural livelihoods
 - More intensive dialogue is also demanded to increase the diverse use of forests and waters

- Draft for the regional strategy 2007-2010:
 - Traditional livelihoods get much less attention
 - It is only stated that the interests of mining and forestry can be opposite to tourism's interests but the balance between them can be reached
 - Recreation and scenic value trade is mentioned as a new idea
 - Another mention is that tourism benefits indirectly the other livelihoods
 - There is no mention of reindeer herding!

Anticipation of changes in rural environment

- Climate change
 - In the national strategy, climate change (8) is a part of a long list that expresses the threats towards tourism industry
 - international co-operation is demanded and the need for more anticipation is expressed
 - In the regional document, climate change (9, 3 paragraphs) is mainly understood as positive thing – although the problems for Southern Lapland are mentioned

- Demographic changes
 - NS: Tourism gives possibilities to live in the countryside; gives services to the local population
 - Effects are positive but the negotiations with the locals are needed
 - No mention of age structures
 - RS: Age structure > wealthy seniors; change in trends along the demographic changes
 - Positive effects
- Other issues:
 - Safety, terrorism, criminality
 - Both in NS and RS these threats are listed both as threats and possibilities
 - Political and economic changes, changes in working life (increase in leisure)



Village of Lokka:

100 inhabitants, beside the biggest artificial lake in Finland, fishing, reindeer herding, forestry, agriculture, tourism as a growing field

Strategies from the viewpoint of the village Lokka

- Villagers' reading of the draft for the new regional strategy:
 - Villages are invisible in the strategy – but it is understood since the strategy is for the whole region
 - The emphasis on tourism centres is accepted but their wish is that the centres take responsibility of the development of the surrounding deep countryside
 - The way Lapland is divided into tourism regions is regarded artificial and from the villagers' point of view it seems to be based on the needs of the tourist centres only
 - Climate change is not an issue for the residents

Conclusions

- Many other strategies are done: closed systems without connections to other systems?
- Tourism strategies construct their own realities
 - Not many references to other fields of life
 - Rural development strategies give wider perspective but tourism is limited to a narrow farm and countryside tourism
- From rural residents point of view tourism is important but in grassroot level it is usually connected to other rural livelihoods and practices
 - Thus, the totality of living environment and livelihoods is more important than the strategies that deal with separate livelihoods