

Socio-cultural sustainability of tourism and the role of PAN Parks status in Oulanka National Park, Finland

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PAN (Protected Area Network) Parks Foundation

- founded in 1997 by WWF and Molecaten
- aims to balance the needs of wilderness protection and community development by facilitating sustainable tourism development in protected areas
- 10 parks in 8 countries

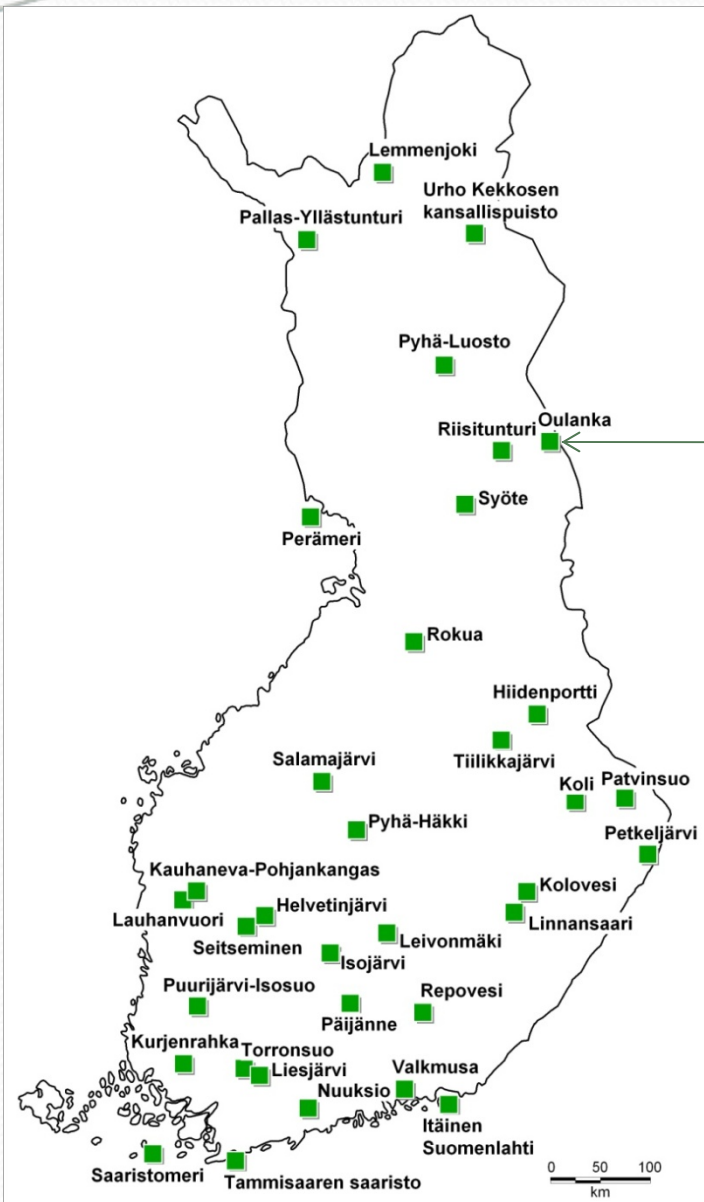


Aim of the study

- socio-cultural sustainability of tourism perceived by local stakeholders nearby Oulanka NP
- role of PAN Park's certification in community and tourism development
 - does it benefit socio-cultural development in the region? does it have some disadvantages from the perspective of local people?



Oulanka NP



Methods and materials

- 40 semi-structured interviews in Oulanka region
 - representatives of NGOs (fishing, hunting and conservation organizations), tourism companies familiar with PAN Parks (certified partners), other tourism companies, non-tourism companies, municipalities and public sector, local people from each four villages close by the park
- four discourses that have different views on socio-cultural development pertaining to tourism in the national park

Discourse integrating nature-based tourism and conservation

- *“It is finding a balance, how many people do you really want there? It is really busy at ‘Pieni karhunkierros’. I do not know if it is really good to make it too big, but many people do not know what can be found in the park area. It would be against the protection if Oulanka would be promoted too much.”* (Tourism entrepreneur familiar with PAN Parks)

Discourse integrating nature-based tourism and conservation

- aims to integrate ecological and socio-economic needs of protected areas by developing sustainable nature-based tourism
 - important to local community development
- critique towards continual growth of tourism
 - environmental impacts are noted
- PAN Parks certification: promotional tool for nature-based tourism, other positive impacts (e.g. responsible environmental business practice)

Discourse integrating nature-based tourism and conservation

- the park is seen to contribute to local community development in several ways
- conflicts between the park and locals are not noted
- not total satisfaction with opportunities to participate in decision making
- tourism entrepreneurs (PAN Parks partners), representatives of municipalities and the public sector
 - work directly with tourism issues, very familiar with PAN Parks

Discourse defending the rights of local people

- *“I think PAN Parks has maybe moved decision making power further away from the local level, they don’t necessarily know and can’t take local circumstances into consideration so thoroughly. I think these issues were previously handled well just with local actors of Metsähallitus.”* (translated from Finnish to English)
(Representative of NGO)

Discourse defending the rights of local people

- focuses on the role of the national park in local community development
- stresses local usage of parks as economic resources which also have cultural meaning
 - tourism does not necessarily benefit local people
- aims to maintain local rights to the region for subsistence and recreational use
- attention to the park's conflict with locals
 - lack of trust and cooperation

Discourse defending the rights of local people

- protection and local use of nature are not seen as conflicting
- emphasis on knowledge gained from everyday experience of living with nature
- growth of tourism is not criticized for environmental reasons
- local residents, representatives of NGOs and entrepreneurs
 - do not work in the tourism sector, not very familiar with PAN Parks

Discourse stressing the economic utilization of nature

- *“Of course we do not want to log all of it, but how much of protected forest is enough? Here we do not have so many choices to make a living. The raw material here is very good, now we can’t use it as much as we could. So that’s it: do those protected areas bring in what we lose?”*
(Non-tourism entrepreneur)

Discourse stressing the economic utilization of nature

- concerns economic development in the region with emphasis on sources of livelihood from a broader perspective
- small-scale nature-based tourism is seen to play a minor role in regional development
 - e.g. timber-processing industry and large-scale tourism to the ski resort in Ruka are more important
- nature-based tourism is not considered to cause large problems
 - focus on the economic development of the industry

Discourse stressing the economic utilization of nature

- does not stress the role of the park in bringing economic and social benefits
 - may hinder the economic usage of natural resources
- PAN Parks: tool to increase benefits of nature-based tourism
- conflicts between the park and locals are not noted
- tourism and non-tourism entrepreneurs
 - somewhat familiar with PAN Parks

Discourse accepting tourism development and the national park

- *“I haven’t really heard about any contradictions. The national park is already so old that people have get used to it and learned to live with it side by side. So I believe that local people take the national park into consideration. At least for me, it’s a positive thing that there’s such a great national park so close here.”*

(translated from Finnish to English)

(Local

resident)

Discourse accepting tourism development and the national park

- tourism development and the national park are perceived neutrally or slightly positively
 - not important issues
- tourism is seen as an important livelihood for the region
- contradictions between the park and local stakeholders are not noted
 - Oulanka NP is a well-established part of the region
- information about PAN Parks should be increased

Discourse accepting tourism development and the national park

- environmental impacts and responsibility of tourism are not understood comprehensively
 - visual, concrete impacts (e.g. litter) are stressed
- not necessarily familiar with the sustainability concept
 - most attention to the environmental dimension
- tourism is not seen to cause large problems
- local residents and entrepreneurs
 - do not necessarily visit the park often, not very familiar with PAN Parks

	DISCOURSE INTEGRATING NATURE-BASED TOURISM AND CONSERVATION	DISCOURSE DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF LOCAL PEOPLE	DISCOURSE STRESSING THE ECONOMIC UTILIZATION OF NATURE	DISCOURSE ACCEPTING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND THE NAT. PARK
Frame	Sustainable nature-based tourism is important to local community development	Local usage of natural resources is more important than nature-based tourism or conservation	Small-scale nature-based tourism plays a minor role in regional development	No strong interests towards tourism or the park, but slightly positive percept. of both
Most important values	Ecological, socio-cultural, economic	Socio-cultural, economic	Economic	Socio-cultural, economic
Primary role of PAN Parks in the region	Promotional tool for nature-based tourism	Hindrance for locals' traditional right to use nature	Promotional tool for nature-based tourism	No knowledge/ promotional tool for nature-based tourism

Conclusion

- local stakeholders mostly have a positive perception of tourism development in Oulanka NP
- important to cover a wide range of opinions from the local level
 - attention to the distribution of the benefits and burdens of park development
- main problems: lack of participation opportunities, contradictions with traditional subsistence economies
- increasing co-operation with local people could improve the mutual relations

**Thank you for
your attention!**

