Local participation in the evolution of ski resorts: the case of Ylläs and Levi in Finnish Lapland

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Abstract

Socially sustainable tourism requires that the local people living in the vicinity of tourist desti-nations should be involved in local tourism planning. However, the realisation of this ideal evokes many questions. Tourism growth often seems to happen on its own terms, and it is inevitably non-local as customers' expectations and life-styles are of great importance. In this article, we ask what is the role of the local community in the evolution of tourist destinations and how do the locals see their possibilities to influence tourism development? These issues are examined through focus group interviews in three villages situated adjoining tourist destinations in Finnish Lapland. The interviews revealed that from the local point of view there have been different stages of development of participatory processes that can be analysed applying Richard Butler's tourism area life cycle theory. The increasing number of tourists seems to increase also the level of concern among local people regarding environmental and cultural issues. Changes in planning paradigms, legislation, and also in public attitudes increase the hopes of the locals that their voice will be better heard in future planning processes.

Keywords: social sustainability, tourism development, participatory planning, Lapland, local community

1   Introduction

> *"The asphalt surfacing and the street lightning end where the first permanent resident lives – just after the tourist cottages. And we are the tax payers who pay for those lights and road surfacing." (Local resident at Levi tourist centre, 2005)*

Tourism is regarded to be extremely important and often the only growing industry in so-called peripheral regions. The municipalities that are engaged in tourism development and that have tourist centres in their areas have been winners in regional development in many ways. Thus, it is natural for the local and regional authorities to be eager to enhance the development of tourism. For the local population, however, the growth of tourism is not only positive. People in areas such as Finnish Lapland are bound to make the move from traditional natural-resource-based occupations into the field of tourism, at least to some extent, if they want to keep on living where they were born. Multiple sources of livelihood and new kinds of skills are often required.

The ideal of socially sustainable development emphasises that the local communities should be heard and taken into account when altering the locality to meet the demands of tourists. As SWARBROOKE (2002, 33) puts it, one of the most widely accepted principles of sustainable tourism appears to be the idea that tourism can only be sustainable if the local community is involved in tourism planning and management. This paper asks 1) what has

been the role of the local community in the evolution of two tourist destinations in Finnish Lapland and 2) how do the locals see their possibilities to influence tourism development.

Residents' perceptions and attitudes have been measured with an "almost unlimited" variety of measurement procedures (WILLIAMS and LAWSON 2001; LANKFORD and HOWARD 1994). However, this study is not about measuring neither attitudes nor perceptions. A more qualitative method of focus group interviews, and content analysis of the interviews, is used to bring up the hegemonic local story of tourism development and, also, to see what kinds of issues can be negotiated among the members of the local community and what kinds of issues remain contested. An important starting point is that not even the smallest community in today's world is homogenous and isolated, but instead consists of different interests and perspectives and is intertwined with the rest of the world in many ways. Nevertheless, people living in a small village within the same geographical and cultural setting share at least some common understandings of the surrounding world, and these understandings were expressed and negotiated in focus group discussions.

2   Theoretical framework: local involvement in global phenomenon

2.1   The role of local views in tourism planning

Tourism is inevitably both global and local. It has been seen as an important element of the globalisation process, but the term globalisation works only as a means of describing the process; it does not offer any explanations (MACLEOD 2004). The tourist product and image that intermediaries package and sell is a destination experience, and as such the tourism industry is highly dependent on the goodwill and cooperation of the host communities (MURPHY 1985). Local communities' views are important both for the economics and ethics of the tourism industry. From the economic point of view, the attractiveness of a destination is related to the localities' environmental and cultural qualities. However, although such importance has been given to the role of local communities for a long time, it does not automatically take into account all local stakeholders. Often it is the business sector that is used to represent the local community (AAS *et al.* 2005).

Host communities' benevolence can be best obtained by involving them in tourism planning. From the planning paradigm viewpoint, public participation is about deliberation on the pressing issues of concern to those affected by the decisions (FISCHER 2002). One of the most influential theoretical frameworks for the idea of participatory planning is Jürgen HABERMAS' (1984) theory of communicative action. Habermas has been criticized for many reasons: it has been claimed that his theory is unequal from the beginning as it separates the cultural and social (lifeworld) from the political and economic (system) interests. Secondly, it has been argued that it overlooks those views and interests, which are difficult to express as reasoned arguments. Also, it looks for consensus in all conditions (e.g. MÄNTYSALO 2005). However, the Habermasian framework works well in understanding that people do not have fixed interests, but participants arrive at an agreement on action that expresses mutual interests. In the communicative theory, the planner's primary function is to listen to people's stories and assist in forging a consensus among differing viewpoints (FAINSTEIN 2000).

Some researchers (e.g. LI 2006), however, argue that especially in the developing countries the involvement of local residents in tourism planning is not possible or necessary, while others (e.g. HAMPTON 2005; TOSUN 2000) point out the varying social contexts and practical hindrances of public participation, but still consider local participation to be extremely important. In the Western world, too, the need for local decision-making is not a thing to be taken for granted. Some issues or destinations are regarded nationally or globally too

valuable for the locals to manage. National parks, for example, are mainly managed by national organisations. Especially domestic tourism can be regarded to be part of a nationalistic project. Sites of significance help to create common identity and are thus important for national identity building (PRETES 2003). This is also the case with national parks and other places of outstanding natural beauty: such "high nature" (cf. high culture) is regarded to be common property and not the property of those living in the particular locality.

In any case, we can presume that when thinking of social sustainability in the long run (as sustainability should be thought of), the ideal of local participation must be taken seriously. There are several reasons backing this argument. Among the most important advantages are that the public participatory process can prevent conflicts between stakeholders and that it is politically more legitimate and equitable. Collaboration also brings value added by building on the store of knowledge, insights, and capabilities of the stakeholders. (AAS *et al.* 2005; BRAMWELL and SHARMAN 1999; COLE 2006.) One of the disadvantages in the use of the participatory process is, however, that participation may be used to legitimate decisions that have already been made by the authorities. This may weaken the credibility of the whole system of participation.

In peripheral regions, the lack of trust towards the national decision-making makes the participatory planning also challenging. The earlier experiences of those living in the peripheral regions of the industrialised world often consisted of remarks such as that the outsiders, the economic or political forces from population centres have made the decisions on how to develop the peripheral regions. For example, BOMBERG (1994) argues that while the natural environment has diminished in the industrialized core areas, in peripheral areas valuable natural environments still exist. Thus, the economic growth of peripheral areas is in contradiction with the nature conservation aims of the European Union. This has led to frustration in people and given an impression that the peripheries are left outside the process of development that is taking place at the centres. However, with the rise of new planning paradigms, such as collaborative and participatory planning, the situation is believed to improve.

The construction and land-use laws from the 1950s relied on experts and did not acknowledge the need for public participation. The communicative planning paradigm arose in the 1980s and 1990s, and since the 1990s collaborative planning can be seen as being the dominant trend (WALLENIUS 2001). The impacts of the European Union's directives, e.g. environmental impact assessment and other international agreements, among them Agenda 21, have been powerful. In the case of Finland, especially the new Land Use and Building Act implemented in 2000 has had the effect of elevating public participation to an important role. The basic requirement is that "every party involved" should be heard in land-use decisions (BÄCKLUND *et al.* 2002). However, it has been argued that while the new law added rights to be heard, it did not add the rights of those involved to have their opinions come true in the plans (LEINO 1999).

If we argue that the locals really should have a say in tourism development, then we have to ask who are the locals that should be heard. The Land Use and Building Act states that "plans must be prepared in interaction with such persons and bodies on whose circumstances or benefits the plan may have substantial impact" and that "the authority preparing plans must publicize planning information so that those concerned are able to follow and influence the planning process" (Land Use and Building Act 1999). However, the idea of involving the "locals" is more complicated to realize. Who represents the locals and how to reach all "concerned"?

Being a local often implies the idea of being a part of a geographically outlined community, but the concept of community is a difficult one. A community has often been used as the symbol of a past and better and simpler age (ELIAS 1974), and especially in the context of tourism this is still often the case. The authenticity of a local community is one of the attrac-

tions used in tourism marketing all over the world, and one that often suffers as a result of tourism (e.g. UNEP 2002). In an era of globalisation, local communities consist of a variety of groups and individuals with different conceptions of the place. Even in small villages there are different action spaces, meaning the networks, connections and actions, and different ways to take part in the local life (MASSEY 1995). In the villages around Lapland's ski resorts, for example, such growing groups as second-home owners and seasonal workers are becoming increasingly more important. However, in the context of the present study, the group "locals" consist of such permanent residents that actively participate in the work of the voluntary village committee (village association), which may mean that they are more willing to have their voice heard than the village population as a whole.

2.2   The specificity of tourist resorts in peripheral area

Our study focuses on two of the biggest tourist centres in Finnish Lapland, Levi and Ylläs (Fig. 1). Both centres have grown around old villages. Levi is part of the village of Sirkka, and the villages of Äkäslompolo and Ylläsjärvi are located on the opposite sides of the fell Ylläs. The tourist resorts have beds for around 20 000 tourists each, although Levi is slightly bigger and offers more activities and services. Ylläs has a reputation for being a quieter and more wilderness-type of place. The villages in the area have undergone demographic development that differs from the other villages in these local districts: the population of the tourism villages has been growing, and is expected to grow also in the future, while the other villages in the local districts of Kittilä and Kolari have been suffering from dramatic out-migration (HAKKARAINEN 2005). The high season in tourism is winter, especially from February to late April, for both of the centres. Downhill and cross-country skiing, and snow mobile, husky and reindeer safaris and other winter activities are their main tourist products. December has become popular especially among British tourists because of the Santa Claus package tours. November is becoming more and more popular because of early skiing possibilities.
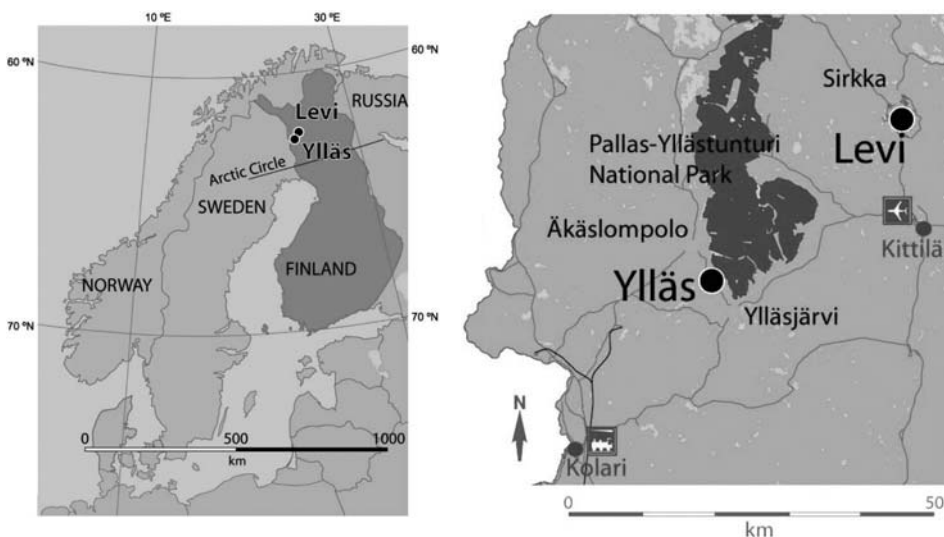

Fig. 1. The study area: the villages of Sirkka (at the Levi tourist centre) and Äkäslompolo and Ylläsjärvi (at the Ylläs tourist centre).

The centres can be seen as comprising three basic elements: an old rural village, an urbanising tourist centre, and the surrounding wilderness area (Fig. 2; METTIÄINEN 2007). The three elements are socio-spatial environments and describe the spatial perceptions and expectations people have of different kinds of environments. The interaction of the elements describes the spatial competition between the different types of environments at tourist centres: the tourist centres function as meeting points for the rural, the urban, and the wilderness aspects. Nature-based tourist destinations provide the settings for rural villages, urban centres and – at least the images of – wild nature to meet. Similarly, wilderness tourism meets rural tourism. Tourist resorts can be seen as centres on the periphery, while the peripheral area can be divided into two categories: 1) rural villages with agricultural activities, fields, local residents, traditional architecture, hospitality, and 2) wilderness nature characterised by being uninhabited, wild, having specific species of flora and fauna, and landscapes (LÜHTJE 2005). In the current situation of growing tourism, the elements of rural village and wilderness nature may be threatened as the tourist centre element is growing as a result of the building of new routes and new cottage areas. However, also these two elements should be maintained, as they are important resources, and even prerequisites, for the tourism industry at the centres: for example, wilderness nature has a crucial role in the images of Lapland and its tourism marketing, and therefore tourists expect to see natural landscapes and to be in the middle of or have immediate access to wilderness.

The three elements overlap and are combined in different ways at each centre. At Ylläsjärvi and Äkäslompolo, for example, the old village seems to be more important than at Levi. Also, the surrounding wilderness is more emphasised at Ylläs; this is especially so because of the Pallas-Ylläs National Park, which safeguards the nature values of the area. The urban tourist centre is more important and dominating for Levi's image.

The tourism area life cycle set out by Richard BUTLER (2006) has served as one of the main theoretical foundations in tourism development studies in the field of geography (HALL 2006). The model describes the development of tourism and its effects on the physical, economic, and socio-cultural foundations of the area. While dealing with the local population, the model suggests that tourism does not have much influence on the social or cultural structures at the exploration stage. At the stage of involvement, the interaction between tourists and locals increases, but from the development stage onwards the meaning of local control weakens. After that, at the stages of consolidation and stagnation, outside control is strong (BUTLER 2006). The basis for the model is, however, in the life cycle theory of a product developed in business economics, and as Butler himself has noted, it does not take into account the politics of development (BUTLER 1980/2006). Thus, the main point is

Fig. 2. The three elements of peripheral tourist centres.

not socio-cultural development. However, longitudinal studies show that cultural and environmental issues do come up in the later phases of tourism development (KAUPPILA 2000; KARIEL 1989). In this paper, we set out to distinguish the various tourism development stages from the viewpoint of the local inhabitants' participation possibilities at two tourist resorts in Finnish Lapland. The perspective is unavoidably tied to the current situation of these two tourist resorts since the narratives of the past are always filtered through the present situation. Also, future prospects are connected to our understanding of the current situation. The future prospects concerning public participation issues are also related to changes in legislation.

2.3   Development in three stages

There is a variety of roles for local participants and the potential and actual conflicts that can emerge from increased visitation and development (BUTLER 2006, 181; JOHNSTON 2006). Generally speaking, three different stages of interaction and participatory practices between the tourism industry and local people can be distinguished on the basis of the results of interviewing the local groups. These stages appear to follow on from the growth in tourism such that in the beginning the attitudes regarding tourism are more positive and participation is more direct and spontaneous than in the later phases, at which time also the negative aspects of tourism become obvious (e.g. JÄRVILUOMA 1993).

The different stages of interaction are here named based on Richard BUTLER's (1980/2006) theory on the life cycle of a tourism area. According to Butler's theory, the first stage is exploration, which can be distinguished also in the case of these tourist destinations in Finland, but which can be labelled as pre-tourism. For example, the people in Ylläsjärvi refer to early Finnish explorers, who brought the village to the attention of people in the southern parts of country. In this article, thus, the first stage is called involvement, the second stage is labelled development and the third consolidation. According to Butler, after the stage of consolidation comes stagnation and then either decline or rejuvenation. The first three stages can be distinguished in the course of interviewing the local people, but not the two later ones, although planning and the speed of development is nowadays so fast that the current situation could later be interpreted as some kind of rejuvenation and altering of the places. We have not attempted to precisely pinpoint the different stages, but instead to provide a rough allocation based on the experiences and understanding of the local village committees. Table 1 summarises the different stages and after that we proceed to deal with each of them in more detail.

Table 1. The main development stages of tourism at the tourist centres of Ylläs and Levi from the villagers' points of view.

	Interaction and participation mode
Involvement (1930s to 1960s)	Close interaction with locals and tourists, small-scale local entrepreneurship, home accommodation
Development (1970s to 1990s)	Fast growth in tourism industry, locals have few possibilities to participate, feeling of powerlessness
Consolidation (2000 and onwards)	Tourism still growing and decisions are in many cases made without hearing local people. However, legislation demands more public participatory practices and thus locals are confident of having more opportunities to influence to future development.

3   Data and method

The study is qualitative by nature. This means that the focus is more on understanding and interpreting than on explaining. Because of the non-representative sample, the basic purpose is not to try to provide statistical generalizations, but to produce a thick description of a socially important issue based on purposive sampling (DECROP 2004). From the social constructivism point of view, written or spoken discourses do not represent only individual opinions, but bear more extensive cultural meanings, and the analysis reveals what kinds of issues have social importance (BERGER and LUCKMANN 1966; see also e.g. HOLLINSHEAD 2004). Choosing the qualitative method also affects the mode of reporting the results: since the findings in qualitative research are more holistic in nature than produced by surveys, and inseparable from data gathering, the results and discussion cannot be totally separated.

The data were collected by means of focus group interviews conducted in each village. Ten focus group interviews were conducted between October 2005 and May 2006 (see METTIÄINEN 2007). One interview was conducted involving the villagers of Sirkka (adjoining Levi), one in Äkäslompolo (Ylläs), and one in Ylläsjärvi (Ylläs). Each interview gathered together more than ten participants, and altogether 35 villagers were interviewed. This article presents the analyses results of only these three interviews since the focus here is on the views held by the permanent local residents at the said tourist destinations. The other seven interviews were conducted with groups of authorities, second-home owners, and seasonal workers.

Table 2. Composition of the three villagers' focus groups.

Focus Groups	Date	Duration	Number of partici- pants	Female/ male	Native- born/ in-migrants	Tourism workers/ tourism entrepreneurs/ primary production/ other	Connections to official decision- making
Villagers of Äkäslompolo	26/10/2005	2 h 30 m	10	3/7	7/3	2/6/0/2	1 member of local council and board
Villagers of Ylläsjärvi	21/11/2005	2 h 30 m	14	7/7	8/6	4/6/0/4	
Villagers of Sirkka	03/11/2005	3 h	10	4/6	7/3	2/3/2/3	1 member of local council and board

A focus group interview can be defined as a research technique that is used to collect data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher (MORGAN 2002). This means that the situation is not a naturally occurring one, but arranged by the researcher. The collective issue, focus, and communication within the group are of vital importance (VIKEN 2006). The composition of the group is also important: a group of friends or family members is different from that of strangers or people linked by official relationships.

The participants in the focus group interviews conducted among the local residents at Levi and Ylläs consisted of the members of the village committees. These people do voluntary work in the interests of the development of the village and can thus be expected to have opinions, be willing to express their views, and subscribe to positive attitudes regarding the

research issue (cf. VIKEN 2006). The groups were quite heterogeneous as regards age, sex, and occupations, but many of the participants are native villagers and most of them have some connections with the tourism industry. The recruitment was made at random in that all villagers were asked to participate, but the invitations were left to the chairperson of the committee to forward, and there was no system in effect to ensure that all actually got information of the meeting.

The most interesting aspect of focus group interviews is the negotiation possibility between the participants. The themes of the interviews are planned by the researcher, but the emphasis placed on the various issues is determined by the interviewees. The interviewees can discuss and even debate the issues they feel to be especially important, and totally new issues can also arise during discussions. The data obtained are based on group interaction (VALTONEN 2005) and can thus vary from one group to another although the interview themes remain the same. The objectives of the interview do not include achieving consensus on the various questions, but to study different understandings, attitudes, and opinions (AHOLA 2002). However, the issues are negotiated within the group, and it seems that people are mainly willing to listen each other's arguments and at least to try to evaluate the issue from the various points of view to create some kind of consensus. Thus, although consensus is not an objective, collaborative learning does take place during interviews. An important prerequisite for the researcher is to create a congenial atmosphere promoting the free expression of opinions.

Although the focus groups in this study were homogenous in that everyone had personal experience of the development of the tourist centre, the fact that people are in different positions in regard to official planning processes and to tourism business, for example, has a particularly enriching effect on the data. One feature of one of the interview situations was, for example, that there was a person representing the local people on the municipal council, and there were villagers owning land at important tourism sites, there were women who had moved to the locality from elsewhere in the country and had married local men, and a person, who had returned to her native village after many years of living elsewhere in Finland and abroad. This heterogeneity in the participants' backgrounds made the negotiation process fruitful.

The advantages of focus group interviews are many, but there are also limitations to the method. The artificial nature of the research setting, the influence of the peer group and/or dominant individuals, and the influence of the researcher as a moderator are among the most important (THOMAS 2004). From the positivist tradition's perspective, an important limitation is that the small non-representative sample limits the ability to generalise the results to apply to a wider population. Thus, statistical generalisations are not possible, and it cannot be argued that the views expressed in focus groups represent the opinions of the whole populations of the three villages. However, in this case a survey study was conducted in the same villages in order to be able to make generalisations (Sippola and Jokinen, in preparation), and these results proved to be quite similar to the ones from the focus group interviews. The results have validity also for other cases in the sense of transferability which means that the use of purposive sampling and thick description of the case gives other researchers the opportunity to appraise the findings and also the extent to which they could be transferred to other settings (DECROP 2004).

Discussions within the focus groups were directed with the help of some basic questions about the development of tourism in the villages and the local views of the current situation. Placing the issues on a map stimulated the discussion. The mappings concerned the places that they regard as positive places and good planning solutions and places they regard as negative or somehow threatened. After this mapping, the group held a discussion about their findings. Map-making provided concrete geographical research knowledge.

The discussion themes provided the structure for the content analysis in this paper. In addition to textual material, the interviewees were asked to draw on a map of the village. The method of content analysis mainly focuses on the issue of what people say, but in some cases attention has also been drawn to the more discourse analysis type of question of how people speak about things. Also, studying the issues that have been raised and debated in relatively free-form discussion situations reveals the hegemonic discourses used when speaking of tourism development in the area.

4   Analysis of the case study

4.1   Local beginning – small-scale and close interaction between tourists and locals

The beginning of tourism in all three villages dates back to the 1930s when skiers discovered these locations. Villagers from the various villages tell the same story: in the beginning, the relations between tourists and locals were simple and direct. For example, people in the village of Sirkka recall how the local women's association knitted warm socks for the skiers in the 1930s, and in Ylläs there is a small archive of correspondence between tourists and local people providing accommodation for tourists in their homes in the 1940s. These letters are partly very personal and caring.

During the focus group interview, the villagers in Äkäslompolo started to assess the role of tourists in developing tourism in the area. This was as a kind of a moment of enlightenment for the group members themselves: they recalled that in the early years it was the tourists who told the villagers how to develop tourism. The tourists advised the locals to charge for the services and they asked the locals to turn the former farm buildings into tourist accommodation facilities. One manifestation of the close interaction between the local people and tourists is that some powerful personalities among the tourists are still well remembered. Thus, the tourism industry in the villages was mainly run by small-scale local entrepreneurs, and sometimes more as a hobby than as serious business undertakings.

4.2   Time of growth – outsider interests rule

During the interview, the villagers of Ylläsjärvi declared first that the tourism industry came to the area as late as in the 1970s. It was only then that the interviewees realised that it had made its entry already in the 1930s. However, this more recent date reveals when tourism really started to grow. The following translated excerpt shows how the villagers of Sirkka described the situation in the 1980s:

> *It was in 1989 that this place exploded: the number of inhabitants started to grow after the years of out-migration. The locals started to establish their own enterprises and tourism displaced the traditional industries of reindeer herding, agriculture, and forestry. Since then, tourism has been so important that we just have to speak positively about it. Right up until today, everything has just appeared; we have had no say in the development. The decisions are made silently at the local council's offices, and the elected officials from other villages don't know these places or the prevailing situations.*

The situation is much the same in the other two villages. Tourism began to grow in the 1970s, and picked up especially in the 1980s when development decisions began to be made with-

out local participation. One example of this is from Äkäslompolo: in the 1980s, the law required that the reindeer herders had to be informed about the general plan. Other locals were informed only randomly. According to the villagers, the local district officials "just happened to show the plan to the other locals in Äkäslompolo when these passed by, but they did not ask for the villagers' opinions at all". The plan was on view at the local district offices, but there was nobody to tell what the markings and abbreviations meant.

In Äkäslompolo, the villagers presented a petition for the preservation of the natural environment during the planning process. Seventy people signed it, and now the locals regard the petition as having been the seed for the national park, which was not, however, established until 2006. In the 1970s, the local district officials were opposed to the idea of a national park, one reason for this resistance being that the national park would prevent the development of the tourism industry in the area – a view that is quite the opposite to the one prevailing nowadays.

The positive aspect at this stage was – paradoxically – that the recession began in the early 1990s. The villagers of Äkäslompolo say that at that time when everyone had economic problems, decision-making evolved and became more democratic. At the end of the 1990s a series of round-table discussions were held, and the villagers are still very content with the results of this common planning. Compared to some contemporary plans by private tourist entrepreneurs, they see some major threats, and the worst thing from the locals' point of view is that their opinions have not even been asked for.

4.3   Powerful tourism business – hopes for better participation possibilities

During the past few years, local people in every village have become increasingly involved in the tourism business. However, in Sirkka, for example, the locals estimate that 90 % of the turnover earned from tourism is in the hands of non-resident entrepreneurs. Thus, the locals still run quite small enterprises. The pace of tourism development is described as being so fast that the villagers realise only afterwards what has taken place: "We can only read about these things in the newspapers."

A major recent problem, especially in Sirkka, is that the land in the village centre appears to be too valuable and the villagers are not granted construction permits for their own blocks of land. The general plan requires that the core areas be used for more efficient tourism construction. This problem has been interestingly generalised as "being typical for these kinds of places." This expresses the view that the locals have concerning tourist centres in general. The view that there should now be a stop put to the growth of tourism industry in the locality was expressed. This means that the limits of what is acceptable change have been reached from the residents' point of view.

The Land Use and Building Act implemented since 2000 has raised hopes for better participation practices. Interviewees stated that now there is also more willingness and possibilities to participate, and the changes taking place in the villages cause of increasing worry. The situation confirms for its part the findings of other similar studies (KARIEL 1989; JÄRVILUOMA 1993, MAROIS and HINCH 2006; MARTIN 2006).

People in Äkäslompolo also expressed the view that they have received above-average training in how to read plans. The pace of change has been so rapid that they have had to add to their knowledge about planning processes. The villagers of Sirkka are hopeful regarding the new law, but they also have doubts about how their opinions will be taken into account. The situation in the village of Ylläsjärvi is somewhat different since there the villagers appear to feel that they have more power. This is maybe due to private land-ownership and to the fact that the best building land was situated outside the village and the

fields of the village were preserved in their former use. The possibilities of participation were also asked about in a survey study conducted in the same villages and its results showed that people in Ylläsjärvi were the most content when it comes to having one's voice heard in planning (Sippola and Jokinen, in preparation).

4.4   Putting current issues on a map

An interesting feature of the focus group interview held in Äkäslompolo was that when the participants were asked to present themselves and tell about their relationship with the place, they immediately also stated how worried they were because of the current tourism development.

Current issues and future expectations were discussed more thoroughly through map-making. Mental maps served in our study as concrete mappings of the landscapes held by the locals regarded to be important – either as good or bad examples of planning, or places that have future possibilities or that are threatened. Also, the participants were asked to give examples of places whose planning they themselves have been able to influence. In addition to concrete map-making, the action of mapping worked as a stimulus for concretising the discussions and negotiations within the focus group.

The issues raised during the mapping process can be classified under three themes: 1) relations between local district authorities and the tourist village, 2) issues concerning nature conservation, and 3) conflicts between tourism and other nature-based industries.
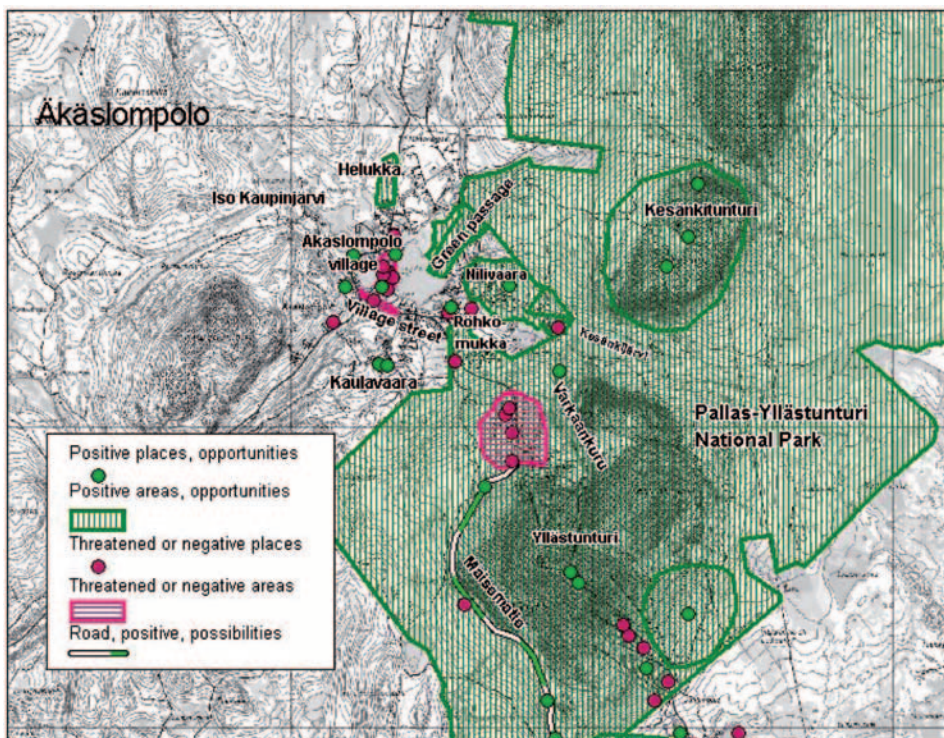

Fig. 3. An example of an outcome of mapping issues in Äkäslompolo.

The relations between local district authorities and local villagers differ from village to village. Äkäslompolo and Sirkka have their representatives either on local councils or boards. However, people in both of these villages are more critical of local district decision-making than the people of Ylläsjärvi. The criticism at the local district level was targeted mainly at the issue that people outside the village do not know the places and spatial practices of the village in question. Thus, for example, the planning of trails and building locations could have been easily improved had the local villagers been consulted. In Äkäslompolo, those who tried to defend the authorities have difficulties in getting their voice heard. Excessive and misdirected tourism construction is seen as being the foremost problem. In Sirkka, the biggest problem is related to the use of Kätkätunturi Fell, which consists mainly of privately owned forestland, but its use for forestry or construction is prohibited, at least until further notice. Thus, the people owning land on Kätkätunturi feel that other people get the economic benefits of tourism, while they have to keep their lands as recreation areas that the tourists are able to use for free based on the common every-man's rights. In a way, the conflict over Kätkätunturi can be interpreted as a clash between the needs of the growing tourist centre and the threatened and endangered rural village as the Kätkätunturi forests are owned by local inhabitants and forestry in the area has been stopped because of the tourism and recreational values of the area.

Also, a common understanding among the people from the three villages was that those making decisions at the local district office do not understand the specific situations prevailing in tourist villages. For example, the need for bigger schools in tourist villages is difficult to understand, as other villages have to close down their schools because of lack of pupils.

The Finnish Forest and Park Service, Metsähallitus, manages the national parks, but it also has a forestry department and a real-estate department. Especially people in Äkäslompolo have been critical over the matter that when more land is set aside from forestry in the national parks of the area, Metsähallitus' Forestry Department tries to extract more profit from the remaining forestry land. In the villages of Ylläs, the Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park (see Figure 1) is regarded as guaranteeing the nature values of the area. In Sirkka, the conservation issue is more problematic because of the Kätkätunturi situation: nature values are felt to be important, but the landowners want to get some economic benefit from their lands. One theme of discussion is related to the possibility of putting a price on the scenic values and to pay the landowners for preserving their lands as they are.

The third important issue raised during the mappings is that of the relations between traditional rural livelihoods, such as reindeer herding, forestry, and agricultural land-use, and the more recent tourism industry. Conflicts arise especially over land-use issues. The main criticism is directed at state-owned forestry, but also reindeer herders' common forests get their share of the criticism:

> *Tourists are good in that they stay on the trails, but the trail surroundings should be kept in a natural state. However, local reindeer herders have constructed a road and done large cuttings in an area where there are five cabins built by Metsähallitus. (Interview in Äkäslompolo, 2005)*

In most of the comments, however, reindeer herding and tourism are seen as being complementary. Tourism offers work for reindeer herders in their off-season (when there is not much herding to do). In many other parts of Lapland reindeer herders are out of work part of the year. Agricultural land-use has been declining while tourism has been increasing, and tourism has compensated for the loss of jobs in agriculture. This is appreciated, but the threat of losing all of the traditional livelihoods and of becoming totally dependent of tourism is also felt to be a real one. Also the dramatic changes in the traditional landscapes are criticised.

5   Discussion

The enlargement of tourism industry has been rapid in recent decades in Ylläs and Levi, and the local people have become more worried of the situation. In the earlier stages tourism industry was more in the hands of the locals and it was more a hobby than serious business. As Butler's model suggests, the increase in the number of visitors and facilities for tourists arises opposition among residents and makes them vigilant in protecting their quality of life (cf. MARTIN 2006).

Our analysis of the three villages in Finnish Lapland showed that although planning legislation and practices, and also public opinion, are more favourable to the involvement of "ordinary" citizens to the planning processes, the locals still feel quite insecure as regards their possibilities to have their voice heard in tourism development. The growth of the tourism industry is so rapid and happens so much on its own terms that the time and efforts needed for the participatory processes remain inevitably limited from the individuals' point of view. The threats, such as growing land-use pressures and potential for conflict situations that were identified by the locals, call for effective participatory processes and continuous follow-up of local needs. One of the most important conclusions based on the interviews is that local people feel it to be an extremely important matter that they are heard in decision-making affecting their living environments. They have many doubts regarding the effectiveness of these hearings because of the historical development of tourist resorts, but despite this the most important thing is to get the local voices heard. The willingness of people to be involved has been noted in other studies as well (e.g. AAS *et al.* 2005; MARTIN 2006) although researchers have always to be aware who are those whose voice is heard and who may be excluded from the process.

In our study, the view that there should now be a stop put to the growth of tourism industry in the locality was expressed. However, the support for the status quo is not surprising since this is a result reported in other studies as well. For example, more than ten years earlier, the majority of the local people in Kolari were of the opinion that the number of tourists in Ylläs should remain as it was then (JÄRVILUOMA 1993). Thus, regarding the flexibility of the residents the ultimate limit to growth from socio-cultural point of view is difficult to set.

Ecological effects of tourism growth are usually more measurable. Nature conservation has been a disputed issue in the rural areas in Finnish Lapland as well as in many other parts of the world. Along with the growth of tourism, the reputation of national parks has improved and people in tourist villages are demanding nature centres, nature trails, and other information sources about the surrounding nature environment (TUULENTIE and JÄRVILUOMA 2005). This has happened also in Ylläs and Levi, and Pallas-Ylläs national park is seen as a resource for tourism. Levi resides outside the national park but there are strong efforts among permanent residents to enlarge the national park towards the resort or at least to get so called green corridor to the park.

6   Conclusion

In this paper we have asked what is the role of the local community in the evolution of tourist destinations and how do the locals see their possibilities to influence tourism development. We have examined what are the tourism-related issues that the locals themselves raise in a relatively free-form discussion. The chronological stages of the evolution of tourist destination were evident as well in the participatory planning practices as in the growth of the destination as such. The development phases seemed to follow Richard Butler's model

of tourism area life cycle, although the purpose of this paper was not to test the model as such.

Focus group discussions proved to be useful, not only in the sense that the researchers gathered information, but also in inducing the participants to evaluate the situation thoroughly. In some cases the interviewees themselves seemed to be surprised about their own analysis of the situation, and, thus, the research worked also as a reflective process for the locals. This comes close to the ideal of action research (REASON and BRADBURY 2001). The results of the focus group interviews cannot be generalised but similar case studies show that similar problems and processes emerge in other peripheral regions where tourism has grown rapidly (e.g. HOHL and TISDELL 1995; MAROIS and HINCH 2006; MARTIN 2006). What could be done in further work is to compare different kinds of focus groups and their viewpoints and see how the place might be construed differently among different groups.

What is important to note is that the local communities are not homogeneous entities with a single opinion on development issues. The focus group discussions held in three tourist villages in Finnish Lapland showed, nevertheless, that there are many important issues that can be agreed upon as a result of discussions. This article has concentrated on the questions that are culturally shared based on the same kind of attachment to the concrete places where people live and act.

Especially land-use issues are difficult, and it is not possible to take all opinions into account. HALL (1994), for example, states that community-based tourism planning represents one response to the excesses of certain tourism development projects, but it is inevitably limited. However, the focus group interviews held in the areas of Ylläs and Levi showed for their part that using the local knowledge of permanent residents could improve the planning process as a whole. Wider hearings would also prevent serious conflicts.

In the beginning of the paper, we stated that local community participation is a widely accepted criterion of sustainable tourism. The planning paradigm has shifted from the rational on to the collaborative and communicative models and this has enhanced the need to hear the locals (FAINSTEIN 2000). However, these models are developed mainly in urban planning. What has not been taken seriously yet is that tourist resorts are extraordinary places, as they are town-like areas and have the qualities of towns, but do not have the residents of towns. What makes these situations even more complicated is that the natural surroundings form the main attraction for the visitors. Thus, local traditional knowledge about nature-use and traditional livelihoods has to be taken into account in planning. Also, more social scientific research is needed on the process of rural communities turning into tourist resorts as the socio-cultural character of the place and the demographic composition inevitably changes.

7   References

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