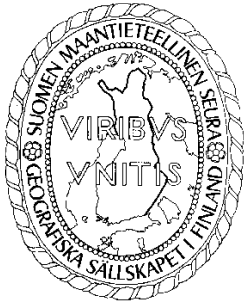


Increasing role of tourism in Finnish national parks

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While the role of traditional livelihoods has decreased, tourism has become an important tool for regional development in northern peripheral areas, and the economic and political expectations have increased. National parks have become attractive tourist destinations also in Finland. This article analyses how the central stakeholders – park authorities, tourists and tourism entrepreneurs – perceive the role of tourism in Finnish national parks. Parks are understood as spaces constructed by historical and social practices; the role of tourism is thus neither historically nor culturally unchanging or indisputable. By analysing planning documents and interviews, the study identifies four discourses that define the interaction between nature conservation and tourism in Finnish parks: 1) *national parks as conservation areas*, 2) *national parks as tourist destinations*, 3) *national parks as destinations of sustainable nature-based tourism*, and 4) *national parks as resources for local people*. The study indicates that the role of tourism has increased in national parks in Finland. Nowadays the aim is to integrate the ecological goals of nature conservation and the economic goals of nature-based tourism by implementing the principles of sustainability. The possible effects of the recent discursive shift on the future development of protected areas are also discussed in the article.

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Introduction

As a result of the growth of nature-based tourism (see Fennell 1999; Hall & Page 1999), national parks have become important tourist attractions in Finland. The visitor numbers have increased fast in parks since the 1990s, and many tourist destinations are situated close to national parks particularly in the northern part of the country. While the role of primary production has decreased, nature-based tourism has become an important tool for regional development in northern peripheral areas (Saarinen 2003, 2005).

Since the first national parks were designated, they have been given a double role both as the destinations of nature conservation and recreation and tourism (e.g. Runte 1997; Mels 1999; Boyd & Butler 2000; Rytteri & Puhakka 2009). In the Protected Area Management Categories adopted by the World Conservation Union, a national park (category II) is defined as a “protected area man-

aged mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation” (IUCN & UNEP 2003: 12). The Finnish Nature Conservation Act (1096/1996) defines that a national park “should hold general interest as a natural attraction, or with respect to raising general awareness of or interest in nature”. Conservation is, however, stated to be a more important function than outdoor recreation, environmental education or scientific research (Metsähallitus 2000: 9–10; see Heinonen 2007). Tourism and other economic activities are restricted on these state-owned lands; there are not usually, for example, hotels, skiing slopes or motorized activities inside national parks in Finland. The interaction between conservation and tourism is often seen as symbiotic, but it can also cause conflicts (Budowski 1976).

While the economic and political expectations are increasing, it is interesting to study the role of tourism in national parks. This article, based on the author’s doctoral dissertation of cultural geog-

raphy (Puhakka 2007), analyses how the central stakeholders of Finnish parks – park authorities, tourists and tourism entrepreneurs – perceive the role of tourism as part of the grounds of nature conservation and the use of national parks. In this text, the concept of tourism refers to the all use of parks for recreational purposes. After presenting the theoretical background, the article introduces shortly the common Finnish history of nature conservation and tourism. Furthermore, the chapter analyses the recent structural changes in conservation and tourism, which have resulted in the increasing role of tourism in parks. On the basis of the historical review and research materials – planning documents and interviews – the study identifies four discourses that define the interaction between nature conservation and tourism in national parks in Finland. To sum up, the various effects of the recent discursive shift on the future development of protected areas are discussed.

Socially constructed national parks

In this article, the questions of tourism in national parks are connected to the theoretical discussion of human-nature interaction, which increased in cultural geography in the 1990s (see Castree 2005). National parks are not understood as articulations of untouched wilderness but rather as spaces constructed by historical and social practices (Mels 1999). According to geographer Kenneth Olwig (1995), parks are as much about the national identity as about physical nature since nature is also a realm of cultural ideas and norms. Nature conservation is a political and societal activity; it is a contested idea which accommodates new meanings and values. The objects, aims and means of conservation change with time and place, and they direct the management and land use of national parks. Above all, nature conservation “entails judgments as to what indeed is nature” (Macnaghten & Urry 1998: 23). Nature is culturally defined as worth protecting, and national parks are managed and used according to socially defined principles. Even in a rather short period of time, there have been clear changes in the basis of conservation (e.g. Runte 1997; Nieminen & Saaristo 1998).

Although national parks have had recreational and touristic goals since the early stage of the park movement, the role of tourism in parks is neither historically nor culturally unchanging or indisput-

able. Therefore, it is not irrelevant what kind of meanings different stakeholders attribute to national parks and to their goals; the hegemonic principles and practices may change over time.

The various ideas of the interaction between nature conservation and tourism can be understood as *discourses*. They are ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic; they make it possible to understand a topic in a certain way and restrict other possibilities for presenting it. Discourses are constructed in a certain socio-cultural context, and at the same time they construct and change the present social reality. Despite several competing discourses, there exists one way of speech and thought that is more dominant than the others at a certain period of time. Discourses are not only words and meanings, but they affect the physical environment through practices (e.g. Hajer 1995; Hall 1997). Knowledge, truth and power are intertwined in discourses (Rabinow 1986). Power relations between discourses change over time; in this hegemonic struggle, some meanings and images succeed in defining ‘the truth’ about national parks, for example, better than the others. *Discourse institutionalization* means that a discourse is translated into institutional arrangements and concrete policies (Hajer 1995: 61). The dominant, institutionalized discourse defining the interaction between conservation and tourism directs the management and land use of national parks.

Common history of nature conservation and tourism

The discussion about the recreational role of protected areas started long before the first national parks and strict nature reserves were officially founded in Finland in 1938. Three phases can be identified on the basis of the Finnish discussion about the interaction between conservation and tourism from the latter part of the 1800s until the present (Sorsa 2004; Puhakka 2007).

In the first phase, which lasted from the latter part of the 1800s until the end of the 1960s, conservation and tourism were seen to support and benefit each other. Already in the 1800s, some nature-based attractions were preserved for aesthetic and touristic reasons in Finland. Nature conservation and domestic tourism were connected with the formation of national identity (see also Runte 1997; Mels 1999). The first national parks

were sights for all citizens, and they were mainly established in scenic areas which already had some tourism infrastructure. Nevertheless, the arguments of tourism achieved less attention in Finland than in some other countries due to the strong natural scientific perspective. For example, in the United States acceptance for the park idea was sought by promoting tourism intensively in national parks; the aim was to benefit from these otherwise worthless lands by means of tourism (Boyd & Butler 2000). Although the touristic role of national parks was acknowledged in Finland, tourism's negative environmental impacts were noticed, and the restrictions of recreational use became comparatively strict in parks (Sorsa 2004; Puhakka 2007; Rytteri & Puhakka 2009; see Metsähallitus 2000).

Since the end of the 1960s, the relation between nature conservation and tourism weakened for a couple of decades in Finland. On the one hand, growing tourism was seen to cause harmful impacts in protected areas. During the environmental awakening, the values of nature and the goals of conservation changed, and the knowledge of natural processes and their threats increased. Consequently, tourism and other human activities were evaluated from a new perspective in protected areas (see Runte 1997). This led to contradictions between conservation and tourism although they were often seen as 'allies' against forestry. In nature conservation, the focus was on the protection of threatened and rare species and their habitats, and the meaning of aesthetic aspects and economic and social benefits (e.g. tourism and recreation) decreased. On the other hand, the establishment of protected areas was seen to restrict the possibilities to develop tourism in those areas due to construction and other restrictions. The visitor numbers were still rather low in Finnish national parks – they varied from some hundreds to tens of thousands – and the economic benefits of tourism in parks were not usually considered significant (Sorsa 2004; Puhakka 2007).

The interaction between nature conservation and tourism became closer in the 1990s in Finland; the touristic role of national parks increased as a result of the changes in conservation and tourism (Sorsa 2004; Puhakka 2007). The first aim of the new Nature Conservation Act (1096/1996) is to maintain biological diversity. Meanwhile, conservation goals have widened beyond specific natural areas, and protected areas – previously separated from their economic and social environments – have become more closely connected to

human activities (Nieminen & Saaristo 1998). The principles of participatory planning have increased local residents' formal possibilities to get involved in the decision-making of nature conservation (see Raitio 2008). In addition, the structural changes related to the demand for and supply of tourism have influenced the growth of nature-based tourism (see Fennell 1999; Hall & Page 1999). So-called 'new tourism' (Poon 1993) includes more flexible, individual and consumer-driven demand of tourism and the stressing of environmental values (see Urry 1990; Saarinen 2005).

The growth of nature-based tourism is still expected to continue in Finland. The working group for nature recreation and nature-based tourism – set up by the Ministry of the Environment – has estimated that nature-based tourism will grow much faster than tourism on average: with the help of the promoting steps, the annual growth will be 8%, and the number of related jobs will double by 2010 (Ympäristöministeriö 2002). One step of this programme is to improve the conditions for sustainable tourism and recreation in conservation areas. A large part of nature-based tourism in Finland is focused on 35 national parks, including 8850 km² of land at the beginning of 2007, and their surroundings. In the 1990s, the average number of park visits doubled and in the 2000s, the growth has continued (Table 1). In 2007, the numbers varied from Kauhaneva-Pohjankangas and Perämeri parks' 6000 visits to Pallas-Yllästunturi park's 312,000 visits (Metsähallitus 2008). The growth has thus not been equally distributed among the areas; it has been more visible in northern Finland – particularly close to the major tourist destinations and routes – than in the other parts of the country (see Heinonen 2007: 305; Puhakka 2007: 136–140). High visitor numbers are also connected to the abundant supply of services inside national parks and in their surroundings (Puustinen et al. 2007).

Consequently, the economic and political significance of nature-based tourism has increased in Finland. Due to the weakening role of primary production, such as forestry and agriculture, peripheral areas have been forced to develop a wider selection of livelihood and new ways to use nature. Nature-based tourism has become an important tool for regional development especially in northern Finland (Saarinen 2003, 2005, 2007). The growing economic role of tourism is also connected to the weakening of the welfare state; while the role of the state has changed, municipalities

Table 1. Total and average numbers of visits in Finnish national parks in 1992–2007. Sources: Metsähallitus and the Finnish Forest Research Institute.

| Year | National parks | Total number of visits | Visits/national park |
|------|----------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1992 | 24* | 358 000 | 15 000 |
| 1993 | 26* | 388 000 | 15 000 |
| 1994 | 27* | 495 000 | 18 000 |
| 1995 | 27* | 668 000 | 25 000 |
| 1996 | 28* | 714 000 | 26 000 |
| 1997 | 28* | 748 500 | 27 000 |
| 1998 | 29* | 771 000 | 27 000 |
| 1999 | 29* | 797 000 | 27 000 |
| 2000 | 30* | 833 000 | 28 000 |
| 2001 | 30* | 849 800 | 28 000 |
| 2002 | 32** | 1 010 000 | 32 000 |
| 2003 | 35 | 1 223 000 | 35 000 |
| 2004 | 35 | 1 263 900 | 36 000 |
| 2005 | 35 | 1 520 000 | 43 000 |
| 2006 | 35 | 1 603 500 | 46 000 |
| 2007 | 35 | 1 696 700 | 48 000 |

* excluding Koli, Pallas-Ounastunturi and Pyhäntunturi National Parks whose data are missing

** excluding Koli National Park whose data are missing

and provinces have been given a wider responsibility of regional development. Although recreation in national parks is free for citizens, it often produces great benefits for local and regional economy (e.g. Huhtala 2006).

The growth of nature-based tourism has changed the attitude towards national parks in Finland. In the 1970–80s, the large-scale plan of the Parliamentary National Park Committee, published in 1976, to establish 42 national parks and 16 strict nature reserves was strongly opposed on the local level. According to the opponents – private landowners, forest industry, local governments and local people – the opinions of locals had been ignored, and the protection of forests would produce large economic losses and social problems (Rytteri & Puhakka 2009). Meanwhile, the sharp division between nature conservation and economy was strengthened in Finland.

Nowadays local and regional stakeholders usually support the establishment of national parks owing to the expected socio-economic benefits, which is illustrated, for example, by the discussion of new parks in the Finnish Parliament (Rytteri & Puhakka 2009). Parks are considered to have a positive impact on the tourism industry and even

on the entire population in the area; the status of a national park is often seen to increase the appreciation of the area and promote tourism development (see Fredman et al. 2007). Thus, there have been local initiatives to designate new parks, and in some cases, the local support and the meaning of the park for tourism development have been central motives for the establishment of a national park. For example, in the beginning of the 2000s, the municipality and other local stakeholders supported strongly the establishment of Leivonmäki National Park in central Finland for economic and employment reasons – in the 1970s, they had opposed the park proposal with similar arguments. Nevertheless, the newest national parks have been established in areas which were already protected in some way, e.g. by the Natura 2000-programme, which may also decrease the critical attitude towards parks in the rural areas of Finland (Sorsa 2004; Puhakka 2007).

Materials and methods

The historical review of the interaction between conservation and tourism forms a background for the analysis of various stakeholders' ideas of the role of tourism in Finnish national parks. The study is based on several qualitative materials. Firstly, the policies of park authorities were examined by analysing parks' official planning documents: 32 management and land use plans, 3 strategies of tourism, *The Principles of Protected Area Management in Finland* -guidebook, the development plan to improve the conditions for recreation and tourism in Metsähallitus' conservation areas (*Metsähallituksen luonnonsuojelualueiden virkistys- ja luontomatkaikäytön edellytysten parantaminen – kehittämissuunnitelma ympäristöministeriölle*), and the report defining the goals of public use in Metsähallitus' areas (*Alueiden yleisökäytön tavoitetila 2010*) (Puhakka 2007: 292–293). Since the analysed plans were written from 1984–2007, it was possible to compare them over time. The plans of Koli National Park are drawn up by the Finnish Forest Research Institute and all the other plans by Metsähallitus. Koli was administered by the Research Institute until the end of 2007. Metsähallitus is a state-owned enterprise (or 'semi-private business') that administers the land and water areas of the state; the management of protected areas is one of its public administration duties (see Heinonen 2007).

Secondly, the research material includes face to face interviews of tourists and tourism entrepreneurs in Koli National Park in eastern Finland. Koli is known as a national landscape, and with 110,000 annual visits, it is one of the most popular parks of the country. A total of 33 tourists, from short-time visitors to hikers, were interviewed in the Heritage Centre Ukko and in the campfire site of Ikolanaho in July 2004. In addition, the material includes 7 interviews of entrepreneurs who operate inside the park conducted in 2001 and 2005. Two enterprises are located in Koli National Park – a hotel and a recreation service enterprise – and some others have a permission of the park authorities to provide recreation services in the park. These thematic interviews lasted from 15 to 60 minutes, and they dealt with, for example, tourism's interaction with conservation, tourism activities, facilities and services suitable in national parks, tourism's positive and negative impacts, and stakeholders' responsibility to prevent harmful impacts (Puhakka 2007: 302–305).

To facilitate comparison, all the documents and interviews were analysed from three common perspectives (which included more detailed questions): 1) the idea of (protected) nature and nature conservation, 2) the idea of the management and land use of national parks, and 3) the idea of the role of tourism and recreation in national parks (Puhakka 2007: 62–63). The materials were examined with the methods of discourse analysis; the analysis did not primarily focus on single words, sentences and their structures but rather on the whole text and its meanings, discourses and their mutual relations. The main attention was paid to the content of the materials (what are the meanings?), but the form of the materials (how are the meanings produced?) was also analysed to some extent (see Silverman 2001: 97–98).

On the basis of the empirical materials and the historical review, the study identified four discourses that define the interaction between nature conservation and tourism in Finnish parks: *national parks as conservation areas*, *national parks as tourist destinations*, *national parks as destinations of sustainable nature-based tourism*, and *national parks as resources for local people*. Moreover, the study analysed what kind of concepts of nature these discourses are based on. The discourses may conflict with each other, but they may also be common to different stakeholders. The discourses are sort of generalizations and not completely uniform with stakeholders' speech; people might use

more than one discourse in their speech. All the four discourses arise in the present park discussion in Finland, but their mutual relations have changed historically. None of these socially constructed ways of thinking is indisputably and objectively the one that should direct the management and land use of national parks. The aim of this article is not to value the discourses or to provide management implications but to identify the various meanings of parks and to make it possible to understand the disagreements over the use of parks.

Discourses defining the interaction between conservation and tourism

National parks as conservation areas

According to the first discourse, the main purpose of national parks is to protect nature, not to satisfy humans' recreational or other needs. Nature conservation is primarily justified with natural scientific criteria and ecological variables, and parks are understood as areas outside economic activities. The discourse represents nature as 'the Other'; it is based on the modern western and mainly Anglo-American idea which separates nature from society (see Glacken 1967; Nash 1982). Nature is seen as an abstract space, and it is removed from its societal context (see Mels 1999).

Because large-scale tourism or other activities utilizing nature may be harmful for conservation goals, they are not considered suitable inside protected areas. Accordingly, the interaction between nature conservation and tourism is mainly perceived as a conflict in this discourse (see Budowski 1976). Due to negative ecological and socio-cultural impacts, tourism and preservation cannot be combined in the same area without problems. The main focus is thus on tourism's effects on nature and culture. People can, however, hike in national parks within the limits of set rules and regulations; in this discourse a small-scale and restricted recreational use is allowed in parks.

The aspects of nature conservation have been brought up in Finland since the beginning of the park discussion at the end of the 19th century. Although patriotism and aesthetic aspects were important motives for the early conservation, natural scientific arguments were also used in the discussion. Mostly natural scientists and foresters started to plan protected areas, and nature conservation was an interest of a small group of experts for a

long time (Rytteri & Puhakka 2009). In fact, only few citizens had the possibility to travel to parks. Conservation was based on the idea of pristine nature that is maintained outside human influence (e.g. large-scale tourism) by establishing separate conservation areas (Nieminen & Saaristo 1998). The discourse was at its strongest in the second phase of the interaction between conservation and tourism, in the 1970–80s. Due to the extensive change of the Finnish society after the war-time, industrialization and other economic activities started to threaten nature more intensively. New perspectives offered by modern science were connected to the conservation ideology, and the motives for protecting natural areas became less anthropocentric (Puhakka 2007).

Nowadays the institutional nature conservation is primarily based on scientific expertise and biological ideas of nature (Nieminen & Saaristo 1998; Berglund 2001; see Saarinen 2005: 39–40). The analysis of the planning documents indicates that the management and land use of Finnish national parks was mainly based on this discourse in the 1980–90s. Outdoor recreation was defined as a legitimate goal of parks, but the attitude towards tourism as an economic and business activity was more critical. Tourism was seen as independent of conservation goals – one of the ways to utilize nature. The discourse has often conflicted with the interests of the tourism sector or local people, which is illustrated by the strong opposition towards protected areas in the Finnish countryside in the 1970–80s (Rytteri & Puhakka 2009).

National parks as tourist destinations

The second discourse is more anthropocentric, and it conflicts partly with the first one. It is based on the idea that national parks provide citizens with places to see and experience nature, and parks are thus established to satisfy humans' needs. This does not, however, mean that nature conservation is not taken into account. In this discourse, the primary arguments of protection are not ecological but aesthetic; beautiful landscapes and other marvels of nature are preserved as natural sights and recreation areas. Nature conservation is mostly understood as maintaining the visual characteristics of nature, and economic use does not necessarily conflict with this goal. The discourse considers humans as visitors who do not remain in nature, and it places thus nature outside society and culture (see Saarinen 2005: 40–41).

Due to the aesthetic perspective, conservation goals are closely connected to the interests of tourism in this discourse. The interaction between nature conservation and tourism is seen as a symbiosis (see Budowski 1976). The main focus is on the positive impacts of tourism, which are not only economic, but aesthetic, recreational or educational as well. According to the discourse, national parks need to have different kinds of facilities and services to create possibilities for citizens to go hiking and get to know natural areas as easily as possible. Some restrictions are, however, placed on tourism and recreation in parks. They are not primarily based on ecological criteria but on maintaining tourists' experiences and ideas of nature. For example, motor vehicles are not necessarily consistent with the ideal image of untouched wilderness.

The double role of national parks is based on the idea that the goals of conservation and recreation can be integrated; nature is preserved outside other human activities in parks. Since the first parks were designated, their double role has, however, caused disagreements (e.g. Runte 1997). In Finland, the discourse emphasizing tourism in national parks has never dominated since development has been rather tightly restricted in parks (see Metsähallitus 2000). The discourse was at its strongest in the first phase of the interaction between conservation and tourism when some natural sights were preserved for scenic and touristic reasons – with the aim to strengthen the national identity. Later the arguments became more scientific, but aesthetic and recreational aspects have remained motives for establishing national parks (Sorsa 2004; Puhakka 2007).

National parks as destinations of sustainable nature-based tourism

The third discourse has become hegemonic in the Finnish discussion, and it has started to direct the management and land use planning of national parks in this decade. It combines elements from the previous discourses; the conservation goals of parks are primarily defined with natural scientific criteria, but parks also strive for developing sustainable tourism. Accordingly, the aim is to integrate the ecological goals of nature conservation and the economic goals of nature-based tourism in national parks. The protection and use of nature are not considered to totally exclude each other. Nevertheless, this new kind of discourse does not

mean that the two previous discourses will disappear from the park discussion.

This discourse pays attention to the environmental impacts of tourism and aims to solve the problems by implementing the principles of sustainability. The concept of *sustainable nature-based tourism* refers to the term currently used by Metsähallitus who has drafted *Principles of Sustainable Nature Tourism in Protected areas* (Heinonen 2007: 306) and developed indicators to measure sustainability by using the *Limits of Acceptable Change* (LAC) -method (Kajala et al. 2004). With the help of the new concepts referring to nature and sustainability, tourism as an economic activity has become more accepted in Finnish national parks. Nowadays park authorities write partnership agreements with tourism entrepreneurs, and their role is more focused on providing opportunities for companies in parks. Accordingly, the policy of denials and restrictions has been replaced by co-operation and the management of tourism within the limits of acceptable criteria.

According to the discourse, national parks have a role as fulfilling the ecological, socio-cultural and economic goals of sustainability, and nature-based tourism is thus justified with regional development. The aim to increase socio-economic benefits connects parks more closely to the surrounding society and decreases the juxtaposition of nature and culture. The interaction between conservation and tourism is understood as symbiotic; they are seen to benefit each other (see Budowski 1976). By stressing economic and socio-cultural dimensions, the discourse also aims at gaining wider support for nature conservation.

As a result of the growth of nature-based tourism and the transformation of conservation thinking, this discourse has had a central role in the Finnish park discussion since the 1990s. The discourse has institutionalized (see Hajer 1995) and started to direct the management and land use planning of national parks in this decade. The analysis of the planning documents indicates that this discursive shift has implied three kinds of changes for management and policy in parks: the role of tourism has increased, tourism is increasingly justified with regional development, and this goal of socio-economic development is finally legitimated with the dimensions of sustainability. In the newest documents, parks are defined not only as conservation areas but also as tourist destinations, and visitors and hikers have become tourists

and clients. Meanwhile, park authorities have started to set goals for tourism development in national parks; the aim of Metsähallitus is to increase the total number of park visits 5 percent annually by 2010 (see Table 1). At present the park plans are largely a compromise of ecological, socio-cultural and economic goals, and the implementation of participatory planning has expanded the idea of expertise beyond scientific knowledge. Nevertheless, nature conservation is still defined as the most important goal of national parks.

National parks as resources for local people

These three strong discourses are challenged by the fourth one which emphasizes the socio-cultural and economic perspectives. It does not primarily define the interaction between nature conservation and tourism, but it gives alternative meanings for national parks and other natural areas. According to this discourse, parks are concrete and historical places which have a lot of cultural value and meanings (see Mels 1999). The discourse stresses – instead of protection or tourism – the local usage of parks as economic resources, and it does not aim at separating nature and society (see Saarinen 2005: 38–39). Nature is mainly observed from the local perspective, and the meanings given for it diverge from the previous discourses.

In this discourse, the goals and means of protection are defined in a different way than in the institutional nature conservation. The establishment of separate and tightly restricted conservation areas is not supported, but all human activities should be in harmony with nature. Therefore, the way of thinking is rather conservationist than preservationist (Nash 1982: 129–130). The protection and use of nature are not understood as conflicting; local use is not considered to ruin nature. Instead of scientific expertise, the discourse emphasizes knowledge based on local residents' everyday experiences of living with nature. Arguments for nature protection are primarily cultural, which means maintaining people's way of life in a certain area and protecting it from external disturbances.

Accordingly, the discourse aims to increase local residents' rights and possibilities to use their surrounding natural areas in subsistence activities and in outdoor recreation. Tourism and especially conservation do not necessarily benefit local people most because they may decrease possibilities to utilize natural resources by other stakeholders.

On the other hand, the economic importance of tourism for locals has increased as a result of the growth of nature-based tourism (e.g. Huhtala 2006).

The rights of local people have been taken into account in the establishment of national parks; local residents in northern Finland and in the archipelago have been granted some special rights relating to the practicing of traditional livelihoods (e.g. fishing, hunting and reindeer herding) within protected areas (see Metsähallitus 2000). This discourse, however, has never been the dominant one that directs the implementation of nature conservation in Finland. Broad local rights to use nature are not accepted either in the IUCN Protected Area Management Category II of national parks (IUCN & UNEP 2003: 12) – which all Finnish national parks qualify for at present. The discourse was at its strongest in the second phase of the interaction between conservation and tourism when the societal significance of conservation increased, and protected areas were strongly opposed on the

local level in Finland. Nowadays the discourse is represented, for example, by the statements of park plans in which local stakeholders demand more comprehensive local rights to use nature. Generally, the conservation ideology based on the western idea of the juxtaposition of nature and culture has often been in conflict with local perspectives (e.g. Ghimire & Pimbert 1997).

Conclusion

This study indicates that the role of tourism has increased in Finnish national parks as a result of the growth of nature-based tourism and the transformation of conservation thinking. The discourse *national parks as destinations of sustainable nature-based tourism* has started to direct the park management in the 2000s: it aims to integrate the ecological goals of nature conservation and the economic goals of nature-based tourism by implementing the principles of sustainability (see Table 2). Nowadays

Table 2. Four discourses that define the interaction between nature conservation and tourism in national parks in Finland.

| | National parks as conservation areas | National parks as tourist destinations | National parks as destinations of sustainable nature-based tourism | National parks as resources for local people |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Frame | Parks are established to preserve nature | Parks provide citizens with places to see and experience nature | Parks fulfill the goals of nature conservation and tourism | Parks should be used in local traditional livelihoods and in recreation |
| Most important values | Ecological | Socio-cultural, economic | Ecological, socio-cultural, economic | Socio-cultural, economic |
| Perspective | Translocal | Translocal (local) | Translocal, local | Local |
| Motives for conservation | Ecological | Aesthetic | Ecological | Cultural |
| Idea of conservation vs. tourism | Conflict | Symbiosis | Symbiosis | Irrelevant question |
| Idea of nature | Outside society (humans are only visitors) Ecological reserve | Outside society (humans are only visitors) Aesthetic experience, source of livelihood | Outside society (humans are only visitors) Object of protection, experience, source of sustainable livelihood | Not separate from society Resource which also has cultural meanings |
| Example from the research materials | <i>In case the economic utilization of protected areas is permitted in some areas, it may not endanger the achievement of abovementioned [conservation] aims (Metsähallitus 1993: 9).*</i> | <i>There are two philosophies; national parks are for people or for research, and the area for research should be protected of course, but part of the park should be for people. And to make it easily accessible for them, infrastructure must be built in the park (Interviewed tourism entrepreneur).*</i> | <i>The development of nature-based tourism [in the national park] promotes the goal of social and economic sustainability by creating possibilities for local people to engage in tourism business (Metsähallitus 2006: 22).*</i> | <i>If it has been noticed that species are becoming extinct, I guess it [hunting in national parks] has to be restricted, but if there is enough bears, just go on... Because they have been hunted in these areas previously, so why not now (Interviewed tourist).*</i> |

*Translated from Finnish to English by the author.

tourism is justified not only with recreational and educational arguments – like previously in Finland – but the aim of regional development is increasingly brought up in park plans. The idea of parks' economic role and close relation to the surrounding society has arisen; national parks are integrated more deeply into the regional (tourism) economy (see Saarinen 2007). Nevertheless, alongside the current policies, there are both more favourable and critical perceptions of tourism development in Finnish parks. All four discourses are represented in interviewed tourists' speech where as tourism entrepreneurs mainly use the second and third discourses which emphasize the aspects of tourism.

By setting the goal of regional development, the interests of local people are taken into account more widely than previously in Finnish national parks. The various discourses defining the interaction between conservation and tourism have thus shifted closer to each other. The importance of traditional livelihoods is still estimated to decrease in peripheral areas (see Saarinen 2005), and therefore, the interests of the fourth discourse will probably meet the goals related to tourism development more often in the future. National parks are increasingly functioning as intermediaries between local and national or international interests in both nature conservation and regional development issues (Saarinen 2007). By defining the goals of visitor numbers and the economic impacts of nature-based tourism, *Metsähallitus* aims to fulfil the objectives set by the Finnish Parliament and the Ministry of the Environment (e.g. *Ympäristöministeriö* 2002). The conservation goals are consistent with the EU regulations and other international agreements.

The aim to integrate various goals reflects the international development although in many other countries tourism has already had a more important role in national parks than in Finland (see Eagles 2002). Finnish parks are undergoing similar change than in other European countries where co-ordinating conservation and the utilization of nature is increasingly seen as advantageous for both conservation and regional development (Hammer et al. 2007; see Fennell & Weaver 2005; Shultis & Way 2006; Fredman et al. 2007). National parks have become more dynamic and innovative; they are rather understood as social and cultural institutions than as static 'museums' or biological reserves (Kaltenborn et al. 2002). Meanwhile, parks have growing pressures to produce tourism income and to show their economic effi-

ciency; park authorities will increasingly have to approach parks as a business if they are to receive public funding (Eagles & McCool 2002: 46–47). Tourism development is also generating financing for the management of protected areas and helping communities cope with economic restructuring (McCool & Patterson 2000; Bushell & McCool 2007). This discursive shift reflects the rise of neoliberalist politics; nature conservation has become more instrumental and market-oriented (see McAfee 1999; McCarthy & Prudham 2004).

The recent changes may influence in various ways the future development of protected areas, which provides topical subjects for further research. The increasing role of tourism in national parks may improve conditions for nature conservation; socio-economic benefits will probably increase the positive attitude towards the establishment of protected areas on the local and regional level. The growth of nature-based tourism will create new economic and employment opportunities for local people (e.g. Huhtala 2006) although tourism's impacts on local living conditions and identity are not only positive. By respecting local residents and incorporating their needs, their commitment to the implementation of conservation may be improved (see Fennell & Weaver 2005; Bushell & McCool 2007).

More instrumental and market-oriented motives for nature protection will mean new challenges for the management and land use planning of national parks. While local and regional stakeholders start to support the establishment of protected areas for touristic reasons, the economic and political expectations of tourism will increase in parks. So far construction and other restrictions have been rather tight in Finnish parks, but management principles and practices can change over time. The increasing role of tourism is justified by defining national parks as tourist destinations. This raises critical questions about the maximum limits of tourism development in parks even though the visitor numbers are still rather low in Finland compared to some other countries (see Eagles 2002). New challenges are caused, for example, by new recreational activities and the increasing use of snowmobiles and other motor vehicles especially in northern Finland. Tourism may conflict with the ecological goals and increase disagreements over the use of parks. Moreover, the interests of the tourism sector might be contradictory to the regional development objectives adopted in specific places (Saarinen 2005).

Support and political pressure for the creation of protected areas may grow while more and more people visit national parks and start to appreciate them (Eagles & McCool 2002: 23–24). Meanwhile, tourists' expectations and demands might grow, which will increase pressures to allow new recreational activities and to develop different kinds of services and facilities in parks. The ecological goals of conservation and aesthetic aspects valued by tourists are partly contradictory. The interviews indicate that some tourists understand nature conservation rather as maintaining visual characteristics of nature (e.g. beautiful landscapes) than as protecting biodiversity or endangered species. For example, when former economic forests are restored in national parks by using excavators and chain saws, these areas do not (immediately) confirm tourists' idea of untouched wilderness.

On the other hand, tourists' expectations and wishes may restrict tourism development in protected areas. A national park with abundant facilities and services is not necessarily consistent with tourists' ideas of protected, pristine nature and with their motives for travelling to parks. Metsähalitus aims to direct the growth of nature-based tourism at the most visited areas, such as national parks (Heinonen 2007: 110), and inside parks visitors are channeled to recreational zones. Ecological sustainability may be improved, but tourists' ideas of tranquil and isolated parks might be threatened. According to the interviews, the high visitor numbers during seasons have already started to disturb tourists' nature experiences in Finnish national parks.

Probably the role of tourism will not decrease in the near future, but socio-economic goals and touristic arguments will still gain strength in national parks in Finland (see Heinonen 2007: 241–244). Following foreign examples, Finnish parks may start to operate more like corporations within government and respond to visitors' needs and wants (see Eagles 2002). In the future, problems might be caused by the insufficient funding of service provision and tourism management in parks, and entrance or use fees may become under discussion also in Finland. Nonetheless, everyman's right has an important role in Finland (Kaltenborn et al. 2001), and the idea of paying for outdoor recreation would probably be found strange by citizens.

The aim to combine various goals is challenging for the management and land use planning of national parks since ecological, socio-cultural and

economic criteria cannot be valued commensurably. While interests have diversified, the integration of multiple goals has become a more important part of the planning and decision-making processes of nature conservation (McCool & Patterson 2000). Although the discourses defining the interaction between conservation and tourism have shifted closer to each other, the goals of national parks will still raise lively discussion in the future, and the role of tourism will be defined in discursive struggles.

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