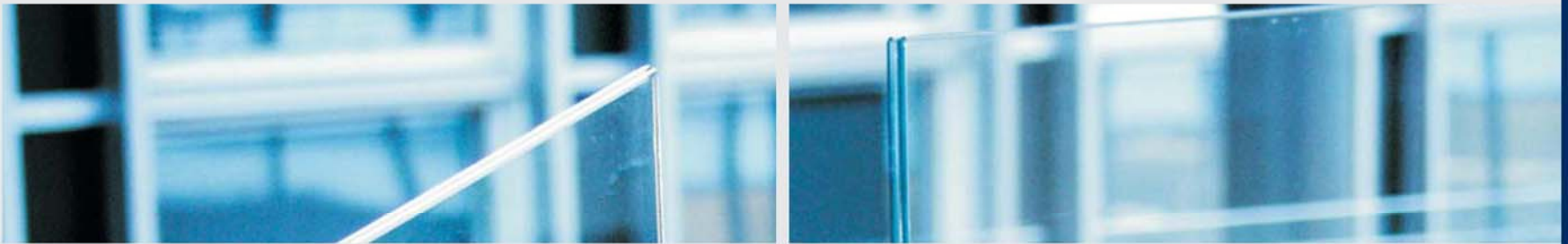


Activating rural communities as cultural agents



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Variation and change in culture

- To understand the role of different cultural agent's and local inhabitants in cultural activities of rural communities, it is crucial to understand what culture is in different contexts
- It is also crucial to understand the role of administration and different kind of organizations in the local cultural process
- Therefore it is necessary to start with definitions of culture

Local culture

- an older anthropological view

- Culture is a certain static, collective whole, which is connected to an area or region or to a group of people
- Culture has an own unique character, its own essence
- A part of culture is reification, according to which certain tangible and intangible cultural phenomena are seen as natural parts of certain culture
- In practice culture is seen as common products: artefacts, buildings, cultural landscapes, means of livelihood, meanings and symbols, oral tradition, customs and habits, world views
- This view still lives in everyday thinking, in local development work, and some times also in current ethnological and anthropological research

Culture as everyday life

- a new anthropological view

- Culture is a continuously changing, individual and dynamic process
- The definition is based on empirical facts, which demonstrate variation, change and heterogeneity in different areas or regions and among different groups of people
- The definition is based on empirical facts, which demonstrate similarities between different areas or regions and between different groups of people
- In practice culture is seen as a process of interaction between different individuals and as changing and heterogenic cultural elements in this process
- These cultural elements are: artefacts, buildings, cultural landscapes, means of livelihood, meanings and symbols, oral tradition, customs and habits, world views
- Likewise, the thoughts about unique cultures, with their own essence, are parts of these dynamic cultural processes

Everyday life produces new culture

- On the basis of the later research, culture functions according to the later definition both in global cultural processes and on local level in rural and urban everyday life
- It is crucial to understand, that the basic quality of cultural process is heterogeneity and change, and it is global
- There is an ability for creativity in culture both on local level and on global level
- Also everyday routines, for instance cooking of home meals, is imaginative combining of food ingredients, which creates new and fresh elements to the life

Cultural and development agents produce new culture

- Locality and local culture are today used as instruments of regional development
- Local organisations and local administration produce different local cultural elements to this purpose
- They are used to strengthen local identities in order to support the welfare and economic development in rural areas in a strongly changing, globalizing world
- They are used in tourism, a promising new industry for rural areas in globalizing world

Cultural competition between different areas

- All municipalities, regions, nations, ethnic groups e.g. seek to raise their own profile
- They seek to make it appear desirable, original, perhaps even specifically distinct from their neighbours, in order to procure both
 - strong local identities
 - and to get as many new inhabitants, businesses and customers - e.g. for tourism industry - as possible

Fredrik Barth's analytical model

Applied to the analysis of the use of culture in regional development

- **Macro level:** National and international organizations
 - Create the framework for local activities with legislation and administration
 - Local culture is seen as a tool in development work
 - Local culture is usually seen according to the old definition of culture: cultural constructions
- **Middle level:** Local organisations
 - Local culture is used as a tool in development work
 - Intention to create a feeling of community and to motivate people to reach for some goal (economic, ethnic, local e.g.)
 - Local culture is usually seen according to the old definition of culture: cultural constructions
- **Micro level:** Individuals
 - Everyday life
 - Local culture is seen according to the new definition of culture: process of interaction between different individuals and individuals and their environment
 - Homogeneous cultural entities with clear borders do not exist
- All these levels are parts of the whole of culture and in interaction with each other -> In culture both the process of interaction between individuals and organised cultural constructions are in interaction

Tendency to produce tensions

- Defined in too narrow and inflexible way on middle and macro levels, cultural elements get into conflict with the dynamic complexity of everyday life
- The cultural production of middle and macro levels easily has a tendency to produce identities and images that are in tension with the complexity of everyday life

Local rural communities in global cultural process

- Localities become more heterogeneous
- Different competing identities and local images become more common and get increased symbolic value
- The heritage of rural communities is used commercially mostly in tourism
- Tourism is a part of a global heterogeneous and dynamical process of culture
- In that process the power of different organisations to create solid images of different local cultures is weakening

Everyday life, identities and tourism

- The culture of tourist resorts is defined basically according to the demand in global tourism
- Local distinctive culture is adapted to this demand
- Rural tourist resorts seek often to present the atmosphere of past times, as it is seen from the perspective of global tourists
- In these occasions the danger is that local culture will be protected to death and to a frozen past
- The image of an authentic culture is contradictory with the local, heterogeneous and dynamic everyday life of the rural community

Past time as a part of local everyday life

- The image of an authentic culture with traits of former life style is important also for many rural inhabitants and for their identification to their home region
- Anyhow, it is crucial to understand, that basically the contemporary heterogeneous and changing local culture is the authentic culture of local rural communities
- The image of the past of this local culture is one part of this local, authentic, heterogeneous and changing cultural process, it is a part of local everyday life

Current everyday culture and tourism

- Local people will reflect locality for tourists whether they wish to or not
- They become objects who are reflecting locality rather than influential subjects
- When this kind of situation is concretised in interaction between individuals - for instance when local people and tourists meet - and is combined with a narrow and static idea of locality, the probability of conflicts is obvious

Challenge of development work

- If administration and development work is not able to take into consideration the dynamic, creative and heterogeneous basic nature of culture, they will cause conflicts and their aim to improve living conditions is partly going to fail
- In the process of globalisation, it is crucial to take into consideration both the demand of global tourism, and the contemporary heterogeneous, changing and in that way authentic local culture on its own conditions

Common cultural production is a part of cultural sustainability

- Central questions considering the basically changing culture is: who defines the direction of changes of culture in different localities?
- It is important to empower local inhabitants to the cultural process, where their own local culture and their identities are defined
- When acting upon this principle, local inhabitants will more easily be committed to cultural changes planned by local administration or other experts
- In this manner it is possible to create a culturally sustainable change, which takes into consideration the cultural welfare and sovereignty of the local inhabitants

Futures workshops as a tool in local development

- The basic work in futures workshops is a part of local interactive cultural process, but organised to reach a common target
- The result of the working process is e.g. common cultural products and cultural images or identities of local communities defined by all different actors involved in the process

Futures workshops

- Create new ideas for constructing the future of a selected sphere of life in cooperation with other people
- It has its own special working structure and principles for action
- The development work in workshops consists mainly of discussions, and the writing of exercises, which are in every case transparent for all participants
- The members of such workshops are usually personally involved in the topic under discussion

The basic ideas of the futures workshops

- Empowerment and active futures work in cooperation with other people in the workshop
- Work based on the analysis of the present state of affairs of a topic
- Open and rich creation of different ideas concerning the possible futures of the topic within a selected time horizon
- Evaluation of the created ideas e.g. to select a desired future and suggest other possible futures in cooperation with the workshop
- Formulation of concrete action plans, with which it is possible to reach the desired future from the topic's present situation
- Commitments of participants to realize action plans
- The strength of the method is that with it, it is possible to reach both individual and organisational views for constructing a common future

Basic literature on futures workshops

- Jungk, Robert & Norbert R., Müllert (1981), Zukunftswerkstätten. Wege zur Wiederbelebung der Demokratie
- In English: Jungk, Robert & Norbert R., Müllert (1987), Futures Workshops. Institute for Social Inventions. London

Awareness of the value of own culture

- Local culture has always value for local people, because culture is their own way of living in their own environment
- If local culture is defined in a manner, that it is not familiar to local people, it is not a part of their own contemporary culture
- It is possible, that inhabitants of local rural communities don't see the value, that their local culture has, when it is seen from different perspectives outside these local communities them selves
- There is a need of cultural awareness both among cultural agents, development agents, and local inhabitants

Common cultural production in futures workshops

- It is important to have both local inhabitants and different cultural and development agents in futures workshops together for to understand
 - which cultural traits are important for local people and their own cultural identities;
 - which of these are possible to develop into parts of local cultural products and services e.g. for tourists
- Also local inhabitants have possibilities to the impact on the production of local identities and the use of local cultural elements e.g. in tourism
- From the basis of this work it is possible to produce cultural distinctiveness, which is in balance with contemporary local cultural process
- This is the condition of culturally sustainable local development

Conditions for culturally sustainable cultural products

- The point of view of global tourists and their demand of cultural products should be subordinate to the local viewpoints of own, local culture
- In local, rural cultural products local people should always have their rights to privacy
- In cultural production local people should have rights to have economic profit, when their common culture is used in commercial way
 - UNESCO's 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore

Strengthening the role of local inhabitants and cultural agents of rural communities

- In futures workshops it is possible to create an interaction between local inhabitants, local cultural agents and different local development agents from different kind of organizations
- All participants of futures workshops are working together and are equal
- The result of the workshop includes both the viewpoints of local inhabitants and cultural agents, as well as the viewpoints of the different development agents
- When futures workshops have the target to create concrete action plans, and commitment of all of the workshops participants to realize them, then also cultural matters have the possibility to become truly integrated parts of the local development work

Case studies

- Case studies present partly cases, where futures workshops have been used, partly cases where they have not been used

Volter Kilpi literature festival in Kustavi, Finland

- Volter Kilpi (1874 – 1939) was a famous Finnish author, who was born in Kustavi, a small archipelago municipality in southwest Finland
- The main subject of his most well-known works is the archipelago culture from the time of his childhood
- A theatre group *Yövieraat* produced several plays based on the literature of Volter Kilpi
- Plays have been performed every summer in Kustavi since 1995
- On the basis of these a literature festival was initiated and it took place first time on 1999 and is now an annual event of Kustavi

Volter Kilpi literature festival in Kustavi, Finland

- The creation of Volter Kilpi literature festival started as a local development project financed partly by European Union, partly by local and national sources
- The main principle of the project was empowerment of local people into the activities of the project and the literature festival
- The project management established several working groups, which were functioning in different areas of activities
 - Local entrepreneurs, teachers, authorities and cultural enthusiasts were active in these groups
- The project management organised also a group with specialists from universities, the library of Turku university, tourism organisations and from Volter Kilpi literature association
- All of these groups gave their viewpoints to the development of the festival

Volter Kilpi literature festival established as a part of local culture

- Local school has used the works of Volter Kilpi in their education
 - This is specially worth of notion, because the works of Volter Kilpi are usually not seen as easy literature
- Local adults started to read the books of Volter Kilpi in a local literature circle
- A small group of women sew for them selves costumes with an old model and used these costumes in the literature festival during some years
 - The costume was designed by students of a handicraft school situated near by Kustavi
- Some local inhabitants are also among the audience of literature festival

To strengthen the image of Kustavi with literature

- The audience of literature festivals consist mainly of summer residents of Kustavi and visitors from nearby cities and other parts of Finland
- Literature festivals are well covered in national media every summer

Game on local, rural culture in Internet (www.wakkanet.fi/loisto)

- *Loisto* is an informative and interactive game for children on Internet
- It discusses local archipelago culture
- It was published 1997 by a development project, financed partly by European Union, partly by local and national sources
- The target of *Loisto* was to revitalise old archipelago knowledge and to discuss current archipelago culture with using a modern media, Internet
- Anyhow, local schools didn't enthusiastically use *Loisto* in their education
- The reason was partly the resistance of the use of Internet as a media in education
- *Loisto* is available in the Internet also to day

Local identities with futures workshops

- The project *Culture as a resource for the countryside* was carried out in 21 rural municipalities and towns in the Region of Southwest Finland in 2003 – 2005
- The aim of the project was to make cultural strategies for the municipalities and towns involved
- Futures workshops were used as a method in this work
- In every municipality the strategies were made with a network of different cultural actors, one of which was the municipality as an organisation itself with its cultural agent's and other authorities

Results of the project

- Renewed and intensified local cultural activities, which have increased after the project
- Closer co-operation with other active people in the field of cultural affairs
- Some of new cultural activities were also used as tourist attractions
- Cultural strategies contained elements of local cultural identities, which were chosen on the basis of common discussions in the futures workshops
- Most important was that local people formed a network, where they were able to negotiate and form together both common elements to cultural identities and renewed local cultural activities

Strengthening the role of local inhabitants and local cultural agents

- The project *Culture as a resource for the countryside* worked also with the integration of cultural affairs in local administration and local strategic development in all
- A special futures workshop of the so-called support group of the project, which had members from municipal and town managers or other leaders from each municipality and town involved
- Workshop produced ways in which cultural strategies can be connected to the comprehensive strategic development process of the whole municipality or town
- Result of this work was published in the same book with all cultural strategies
- Both local inhabitants and local cultural agents can use these results as a guideline in the realization of cultural strategies