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# NATURE TOURISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT – the Finnish context

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# Nature tourism

- Definition: tourism, with main activities related to nature (e.g. Saarinen 2001)
- Lots of concepts related to it: rural tourism, agritourism, ecotourism etc...

# Figures, Finland

Lack of proper statistical systems → no tourism companies under 10 beds in the statistics at the moment → even up to 2/3 of the companies not visible.

## Nature tourism:

- approx. 500-700 activity services enterprises (Ministry of Interior, Ryymän 2007), 3000 companies (Petäjäistö & Shelby 2011)
- approx 32 000- 35 000 man-years annually (Ministry of Interior 2002), 10 000 man years (Ryymän 2008)
- 2/3 of the income ends up to other businesses than nature tourism enterprises (Ministry of Environment 2002, Honkala 2001)
- The annual growth rate for the big safari companies: 7-9%
- The most promising areas: Lapland, Eastern Finland (partly), Helsinki area and the Baltic sea islands

# Typical to the sector nature tourism

- Nature-based tourism concentrates both on state and private forests
  - Approximately 80 % of the entrepreneurs in Finland use land areas not owned by themselves
  - Part of the activities is implemented by using Every Man's Rights
  - Half of the entrepreneurs had faced property rights related problems

(Source:  
Metsähallitus, [www.metsa.fi](http://www.metsa.fi))

## Typical to the nature tourism sector

- The most successful companies base their operations on sub-contracting and/or specialisation
- Big Safari companies and smaller 1-2 person companies
- In general mainly domestic customers (except Lapland)
- Seasonal → need for off season activities
- Customer segmentation level still low

## Typical to the sector nature tourism

- Co-operation within the region or the sector?
- Lot of rural development activities!!!

# Why rural tourism is interesting concerning rural development?

- Nature-based tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors worldwide
  - The income generating from nature tourism typically remains in the rural regions
  - The sector is labor intensive
  - It usually requires strong local knowledge base

# Rural/nature tourism as part of rural development

- More widely noticed in 1980's → "rural tourism as a new form of livelihood in rural regions"
- A big role in rural policies:
- LAINAUS MAASEUTUPOLITIIKASTA
- Own priority in several development programmes, e.g. the *Rural Development*

According to the sector analysis nature/activity tourism will continue to grow also in the future!

- The tourists value clean nature, healthy environment and safety
- Still the main attraction for the tourists to come to Finland

# Growing product groups in Finland

- Incentive tourism
- Adventure products
- Fishing products
- Wellness products

(Ryymin 2007)

# Transnational trends

- According to recent studies the customers value increasingly sustainability and responsibility (*e.g. O'Neill & Alonso 2009, Dodds et al 2010*) → strength for rural tourism?
- Interactive and individual products instead of mass tourism
- The growing amount of pensioner and senior tourists → accessibility
- The role of authenticity
- Wellness and healthy products (Green care, wellness tourism, Nature-based rehabilitation and education)

# Growing product groups in Finland

- Snow mobile safaris
- Dog sledge and reindeer safaris
- Riding tours/safaris
- Hunting?
- Canoeing, hiking and biking

MAASEUTUPOLTTIKKUN  
YHTEISTYÖRYHMÄ  → specialising!!!

(Ryymin 2007)

# The theme programmes of the national tourism board (MEK)

- Summer activities/Outdoors Finland (riding, hiking, biking, canoeing, fishing, wildlife watching)
- Winter and Christmas
- Wellness
- Culture tourism

# The successful products are typically:

- Simple
- Environmental friendly
- Include high level of participation from the customer
- Can be offered around the year in some form
- Not connected to any special place (the weather conditions)



Suomeksi In English

## FINNATURE LTD

Your ground tour operator in Finland!



Great Grey Owls will be again nesting this year in Oulu area. Photo: Jari Peltomäki

Finnature Ltd is a ground tour operator specialised in wildlife- and birdwatching tours and wildlife photography. Finnature's company philosophy is to raise public perception of the value of Finland's natural environments, and to help preserve them for future generations. Finnature's tours offer

### Problems with e-mails!

There has been some problems with Finnature's e-mails lately. Please re-send all important messages, if you haven't had reply.

(21.05.2008)

### Guided Birdwatching excursions!

There are still space at our guided birdwatching excursions in Oulu and Kuusamo. Please book your experience with Finnature and Finnish birdspecialites from

(21.05.2008)

### New phonenumber at Finnature's office

Finnature's new office number +358-45-129 42 64.

(19.05.2008)

### OWLS IN OULU

There are several Great Grey Owls nesting this year in Oulu area. Also Eagle-, Tengmalm's-, Ural- and Pygmy Owls will be breeding here. Also Black Woodpecker

(05.05.2008)

# OY FINNATURE LTD,

[www.finnature.fi](http://www.finnature.fi)

- Bird watching and wild life watching tours
- Very focused strategy based on clear segmentation of clients and network based working culture
- A lot of effort to marketing research, selection of the clients (foreign, solvent, interested in nature, typically 65 year old)
- Primary customers are travel agencies (also the gatekeepers of customer knowledge)



Good humour trips in the Finnish nature since 1992!

## Hiking Travel, Hit Ky

The links on the left will take you to the virtual paths that define what we are about.

We have served you for 15 years already, and are pleased to do so still. You are heartily welcome!



[Kaupinoja opened!!!](#)

[Water level update!](#)

[New prices](#)

Network-based  
working methods

Connections to the  
research and  
education

## General trends/topics of discussion at the moment

- Cross-sectoral cooperation
- National co-ordination → regional expertise
- Product orientated → customer orientated
- New entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs → fewer, maybe bigger companies
- Non-marketable goods → marketable products

## General trends/topics of discussion at the moment

- Traditional forestry → multiple use of forests (more than just a phrase?)
- New regulated national degrees?
- Presence in the national and regional policy → interest from the "big players" e.g. Sitra
- Social sustainability and the role in the regional economy
- Discussion on the Every Man's Rights

# Challenges

Nature tourism:

- Profitability
- Globalisation → harmonised quality
- Seasonality → need for the off season activities
- More specialisation and networking needed
- Need for innovative products
- Domestic markets in some cases  
    "undeveloped"
- The market segmentation?

# The actors: national organisation of the sector in Finland

- Organisatio level low → based on the region or the sector?
- The administration under several different ministries → wide range of development activities, often even competing with each others
- The Finnish Tourism Board, MEK
- Regional tourism organisations
- Several associations (national, regional)
- National Theme Groups

?

## National Theme groups

- At present 13 fixed-term theme groups appointed by the Rural Policy Committee.
- The cross-sectoral theme groups has been assigned a specific but quite broad topic to work on. The members represent various organisations, associations, businesses, universities and administrative bodies.
- The working methods of the theme groups vary according to the topic.
- Most of the theme groups have 10-20 members, a chairperson and a secretary. They convene 5-10 times a year.

# National Theme group of tourism

- Tool of rural policy
- Focus on promoting the rural tourism, strong focus on farm tourism, not so much on the activity services
- Group of experts from the sector
- Aims to improve the co-ordination, co-operation and promoting networking in the sector

# Suomen Maaseutumatkailuyrittäjät ry


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## Valikko

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## In English



## Suomen Maaseutumatkailuyrittäjät ry

Suomen Maaseutumatkailuyrittäjät ry is a nationwide Association of Rural Tourism Entrepreneurs. You can find web sites of the member enterprises under the following items:

### Members

The association cooperates with Lomarengas Oy . Lomarengas Oy, "Finnish Country Holidays" markets cottage and farm tourism facilities all over Finland [www.lomarengas.fi](http://www.lomarengas.fi)

### Contact information

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## ▶ Etsi sivustolta



## Kävijät

Kävijämäärä: 7686

# Rural development as holistic approach?

The economic benefits are not everything in rural development?

The role of social sustainability/community approach? → traditional use of nature may form obstacles to the development of nature tourism?

# Case hunting tourism: background

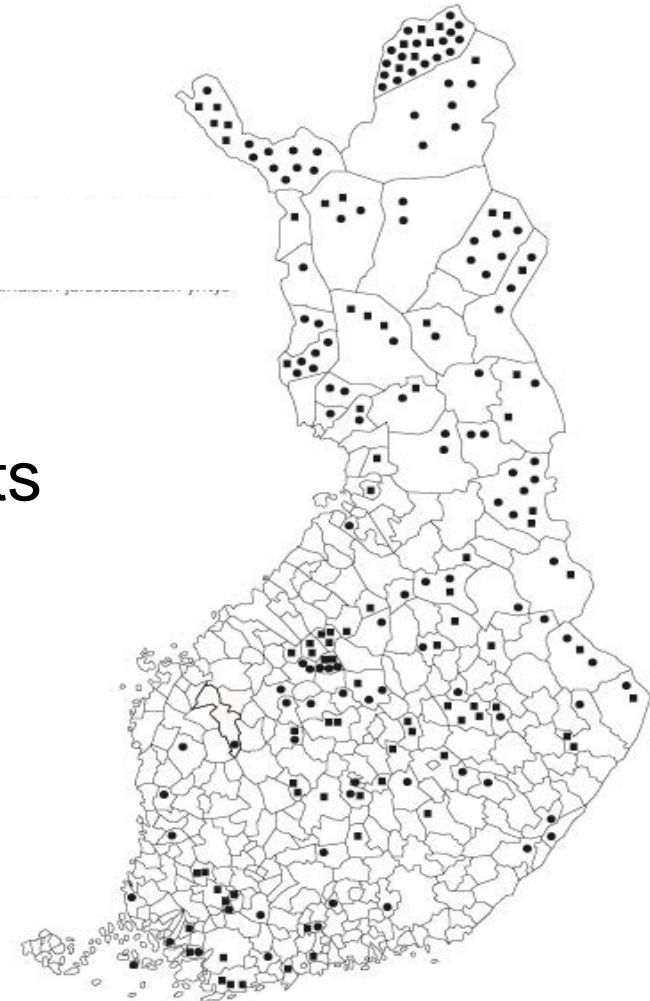
- Hunting has long tradition in Finland, more as a leisure activity than a business opportunity or income.
- On average 6-8% of all Finns are hunters (~300 000 hunting cards).
- The hunting rights are connected to landowning, on state land Metsähallitus (“forest and park service”) governs.
- Most valued game species: Moose, Grouse species (and hare).

# **Traditionally the license policy on common land supports the leisure activities**

- On state land in northern and eastern Finland the locals have free hunting rights.
- Small game licenses are sold via joint selling point on “first served” principle.
- Moose hunting on state land allocated primarily to those who do not have any other moose hunting possibilities.
- The prices are relatively low.
- On private land the hunting rights are typically allocated to the local hunting club for nominal compensation.

# Hunting tourism in Finland

- Provides business potential especially to remote rural areas
- Extension to the nature tourism season
- Possible ecological potential exists
- The companies typically:
  - rural micro companies
  - labour intensive
  - high local knowledge needed
  - multiplier economic effects quite significant



# Characteristic for ”the Nordic hunting culture”

- The hunting is based more on the experience that the bag amounts.
- Equal opportunities for all regardless of their social status, income or even landownership.
- Social aspect of hunting is very important -> strongly socially embedded.
- Hunters themselves highlight game management and prohibiting damages caused by oversized game
  - populations rather than shooting itself as
  - the main reasons for hunting. (Petäjistö et al 2004, Valkeajärvi et al 2004, Liukkonen et al 2007).

## **As a summary from the stakeholder group interviews**

- All groups saw hunting tourism as a business opportunity that could be moderately advanced under certain conditions → the Nordic hunting culture must be respected.
- All groups saw the value of hunting tourism to be mainly its economic effect but were not willing to prioritize the economic arguments over the social ones.

# **Traditional use of nature effecting to the hunting tourism development**

- The local hunters should be prioritised -> local companies, local hunting clubs as subcontractors
- Should be accessible to all → the price and added value of the products are problematic
- The products must base on the wilderness experience, not the trophy
- The "traditional" (local) hunting methods should be used
- Difficult to guarantee the sole access to the hunting grounds → quality of the products

# Hunting tourism as part of rural development?

- Traditional use of nature makes it problematic to develop highly commercial products.
- The traditions in use of nature are behind of some of the main arguments related to negative impacts of hunting tourism:
  - Fear for own hunting possibilities, game is a limited resource
  - Psychological ownership towards the game
- The traditional use of nature is seen also seen as positive product characteristics: pride for the traditions and large wilderness areas
- Customer demand vs social sustainability of the products

## For the work groups:

Consider your own context: local, regional, national

- 1) Is rural tourism development truly a part of rural development?
- 2) Is traditional use of nature effecting the tourism development and how?
- 3) Are the future trends and development considered in rural tourism? If yes, how, if no, what should be done?

AIM: discuss on best and not so good practises

# Thank you!

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