

New Role of Tourism in National Park Planning in Finland

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Abstract

Following the growth of nature-based tourism, national parks have become important tourist attractions and tools for regional development. This article examines how the role of tourism changed in national park planning in Finland in the 2000s by analyzing official planning documents of parks. The planning documents and the policies guiding them are seen to reflect the governance aspects of parks. The study indicates that the role and management value of tourism have clearly increased in Finnish national park planning. In the planning documents, tourism is increasingly justified not only with recreational and educational arguments but also by the aspects of regional development. The aim has been to combine the ecological goals of nature conservation and the socioeconomic goals of nature-based tourism by implementing the principles of sustainable development. This discursive policy shift reflects the rise of neoliberalist politics in which nature conservation has become more instrumental and market oriented than before.

Keywords

national parks, nature-based tourism, nature conservation, governance, Finland

The link between conservation and tourism can be seen to be as old as the history of institutionally established conservation areas. Since the first national

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parks were created, they were given a double role both as the targets of nature conservation and destinations of recreation and tourism (e.g., Frost & Hall, 2010; Mels, 2002; Runte, 1997). Although the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, for instance, emphasizes the ecological ground and the intrinsic value of biodiversity in conservation area management (United Nations, 1992), the updated objectives of IUCN also include contribution to local economies through national park tourism (Dudley, 2008). The global tourism industry has become a significant user, stakeholder, and element of change in national parks and adjacent areas. Following the recent growth of nature-based tourism and ecotourism (Fennell, 2008), national parks attract increasingly visitors also in northern Europe (e.g., Fredman, Hörnsten Friberg, & Emmelin, 2007). It seems that parks and their management have become more dynamic and innovative; coordinating conservation and the utilization of nature is often considered advantageous for both conservation and regional development goals (see Hammer, Mose, Siegrist, & Weixlbaumer, 2007; Mels, 2002; Zachrisson, Sandell, Fredman, & Eckerberg, 2006). The touristic attractiveness of natural areas is seen as a potential help for local communities to cope with economic restructuring in peripheries (Saarinen, 2007).

During the past two decades, nature-based tourism has become an instrument for regional development in Finland, particularly in the northern peripheral areas. The increasing role of the industry is a result of general growth trends in tourism consumption, the European Union (EU) policy instruments favoring "tourism and travel cluster" in the peripheral parts of the country and a clear decline of previously hegemonic sectors of regional economy, such as forestry and agriculture (see Saarinen, 2003). Along the general growth in tourism, visitor numbers have increased significantly in national parks. In the latter part of the 1990s, the Finnish government strongly highlighted the need to develop nature-based tourism and utilize especially the national park network in that process (see Ministry of the Environment, 2002). Traditionally, however, conservation has been regarded as more important function than outdoor recreation, tourism, environmental education, or scientific research in parks (see Heinonen, 2007; Metsähallitus, 2008a, p. 14). Indeed, the Finnish national parks have been rated internationally as well managed and with some minor exceptions to achieve their aims of conserving biodiversity (Gilligan, Dudley, Fernandez de Tejada, & Toivonen, 2005; Hockings, Stolton, Leverington, Dudley, & Courrau, 2006). This reflects the traditional strong conservation thinking in park management.

As regional economic and political expectations based on the potential of nature-based tourism have increased in the peripheries, where most of the nature conservation areas are located, it is increasingly relevant to study the changing role of tourism and its policy background in national parks. This article analyzes the recent changes in the role of tourism in national park planning in Finland by examining how the role of tourism was defined in official

planning documents of parks from 1984 to 2007. More specifically, the research questions are as follows: What kind of tourism activities, facilities, and services were allowed and preferred in parks? How were the aspects of tourism taken into account in park plans? How was tourism justified in national parks? Were nature conservation and tourism seen as compatible and complimentary to each other? Although national parks have had goals of recreation and tourism since the first parks were designated, the role of tourism in parks is neither historically nor culturally unchanging or indisputable. In this respect, the article focuses on the changing aspects of governance influencing the discourses and practices of planning and management of parks (see Rutherford, 2011, pp. xi–xviii), and especially the role tourism in the Finnish national park planning.

Common History of Nature Conservation and Tourism in Finland

The discussion about the recreational role of protected areas started long before the first national parks and strict nature reserves were officially designated in Finland in 1938. Already in the 1800s, some nature attractions were preserved for aesthetic and touristic reasons. Nature conservation and domestic tourism were connected with the formation of national identity; patriotism was a central motive in the creation of national parks in Finland as well as in several other countries (e.g., Frost & Hall, 2010; Mels, 2002; Runte, 1997; Wall Reinius, 2009). The first national parks were mainly established in scenic areas which already had some tourism infrastructure. However, natural scientific arguments were also used in the discussion supporting nature conservation. Conservation was factually an interest of a small group of experts for a relatively long time (Rytteri & Puhakka, 2009). The harmful impacts of tourism were also noticed, and the restrictions of recreational use became comparatively strict in Finnish national parks (see Puhakka, 2008; Runte, 1997).

Since the end of the 1960s, the relationship between nature conservation and tourism weakened in Finland. During the environmental awakening, scientific facts and argumentation were used more strongly to justify nature conservation (see Runte, 1997; Rytteri & Puhakka, 2009). Meanwhile, due to the economic growth, urbanization, development of technology, and infrastructures such as roads and the conservation areas became more accessible for the public than before. As the number of visitors increased and recreational facilities were built in parks, tourism was increasingly seen to cause harmful impacts to the environment. On one hand, in nature conservation the focus was on the protection of threatened and rare species and their habitats, and the emphasis on aesthetic aspects and economic and social benefits decreased. On the other hand, the establishment of protected areas was seen to restrict the possibilities to develop tourism in those areas due to use and construction limitations and other restrictions. Till the early 1990s,

the visitor numbers remained still in a rather low level in Finnish national parks (Perttula, 2006; Puhakka, 2008).

In the 1980–1990s, the goals of nature conservation were transformed. Following the objectives of The Convention on Biological Diversity (United Nations, 1992), maintaining biodiversity became the first aim of the new Nature Conservation Act (1096/1996) in Finland. Conservation goals, consistent with the EU regulations and other international agreements, widened beyond specific natural areas. As a result, protected areas became more closely connected to their economic and social environments with an emphasis to integrate national parks to wider regional and local development processes. This reflected new types of parliamentary policies and governance with the purpose of the state to create favorable environments for economic development (Moisio, 2011). In peripheries, the tourism industry and closer connections between the businesses and national parks were used as tools for this aim (see Saarinen, 2007). In addition, at the turn of the 21st century the new Land Use and Building Act (132/1999), based on the principles of participatory planning, increased local residents' and economic actors' formal possibilities to get involved in the decision making of nature conservation (see Raitio, 2008).

Furthermore, in 1994 Finnish Forest and Parks Service, which administers the land and water areas of the state, became a state-run enterprise (Metsähallitus), which operates in the administrative sector of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Management of protected areas is one of the public administration duties of Metsähallitus, which is steered by the Ministry of the Environment in matters relating to nature conservation. Public administrative tasks and their objectives and funding are agreed annually. National parks and other protected areas are managed by the Natural Heritage Services (NHS) of Metsähallitus, which is mostly funded by the state budget. The core tasks of the NHS are to conserve biodiversity and organize recreational facilities for the public. The general outlines for NHS's activities are decided on a national level in the steering units, where process managers direct core activities. Three regional units' activities are the responsibility of regional directors, supported by area managers guiding core tasks. The NHS regions are divided into park districts which are directed by park superintendents. This administrative model for nature conservation and protected areas, which covers the entire country and has a centralized administration, is seen as fairly exceptional from the European perspective (Heinonen, 2007). Current 37 Finnish national parks, which cover almost 10,000 km², are located all over the country. However, in northern Finland national parks are larger than in more densely populated southern Finland.

The Finnish national parks have faced the increasing numbers of visitors. During the 1990s, the total average sum of visitors doubled and the growth rate even increased during the 2000s (see Puhakka, 2008; Saarinen, 2005). The growth of visitor numbers is not equally distributed among parks, as the

development of nature-based tourism has focused on the areas that are located relatively near the major tourist resorts or larger cities, and thus, a diverse supply of tourism services is available near parks (Puustinen, Pouta, Neuvonen, & Sievänen, 2009). In 2012, there were almost 2.1 million visits to Finnish national parks. Although access and recreation are free for visitors, parks produced total income effect of 109.5 million euros and employment effect of more than 1,400 man-years based on tourists' consumption in services located in adjacent lands.

The increasing demand for nature-based tourism in Finland has followed the international trends of tourism consumption. Nature and natural attractions have become universally as sources of pleasure (Wang, 2000, p. 80) and increasingly commodified spaces for nature-based tourism and ecotourism (see Liverman, 2004; Rutherford, 2011). Along the general growth of nature-based tourism market, recently outdoor adventure activities have become popular in tourism. Some commentators estimate that adventure tourist activities are growing 10% to 15% every year (see Cater, 2006) while the annual growth of nature-based tourism in general is estimated to be about 8% to 10% (see Fennell, 2008; Ministry of the Environment, 2002).

Meanwhile, the nature of tourism has partly changed. Natural areas have traditionally offered opportunities for recreation activities, such as backpacking, hiking, canoeing, and skiing, but since the 1990s new activities, such as snowmobile and snowshoe trekking, climbing, horse and dog sledge safaris, have become much more visible forms of the new nature-based tourism activities (see Vail & Heldt, 2004). In addition, the use of natural areas has become more organized than before. Although many of the new nature-based tourism activities are either partly limited or fully forbidden in national parks (e.g., motorized tourist programs), they have created pressures for the planning and management of the parks and adjacent areas (Saarinen, 2013). As Buckley (1999, p. 191) has stated, there is an increase in the proportion of visitors as commercial and organized tourists rather than independent tourists. According to him, this trend is important for the current and future conservation management as tourism economy is a large and politically influential activity which often represents the only viable industry in the peripheral regions. This has created concerns about the capacity of managers to steer protected areas for conservation, "if management for tourism were given a higher priority" (Buckley, 1999, p. 191).

Conceptual and Methodological Framework for the Study

In Finland, the management of national parks is guided, for instance, by parliamentary legislation, the Ministry of the Environment's guidelines (e.g., 2002), Metsähallitus' own principles (e.g., 2008a), and management and land-use plans and ordinances for each park. These public policies affect or influence

nature-based tourism also because of their specific intent (C. Hall, 2006). The qualitative analysis of the Finnish national park planning is based on the management and land use plans and other official planning documents of parks. Management and land-use plans are drawn up by Metsähallitus. However, the analyzed plan of Koli National Park (NP) was drawn up by the Finnish Forest Research Institute (2005) that administered the park until the end of 2007. Previously, plans were compiled by groups including park authorities and representatives of municipalities, but the principles of participatory planning have widened these groups to include several stakeholders from local residents to the tourism sector. In addition, statements are asked from numerous stakeholders, and citizens may comment plans, which are ratified by the Ministry of the Environment. Strategies of tourism of national parks are drafted by local co-operation groups.

As management policies and practices may change with time and place in national parks (Mels, 2002; Olwig, 1995), current planning documents are seen as representing the dominant but not the only possible discursive truth about the role of tourism in parks (see Hajer, 1995; S. Hall, 1997). Thus, the planning documents and the policies guiding them reflect the governance aspects of national parks (see Waage & Benediktsson, 2010). The term of governance has multiple meanings and uses in policy discussions and research. It can refer to a minimal state, corporate governance over public sector, new public management (i.e., market-oriented operations), or restructured public-private sector cooperation, for instance (see Cashore, 2002; Rhodes, 1996). In general, the discourses and practices of governance can be approached through normative and descriptive perspectives. According to Rose (1999), the governance as normative perspective refers into the emergence of particular understanding of what is considered as right/wrong or wanted/unwanted in certain contexts. From a descriptive perspective, the governance focuses how the desired conditions are constructed in the discourses of power and knowledge. This refers to the idea of Foucault's (1978, p. 2) that power is not so much a matter of a general system of domination as of complex strategies situated and manifested in every social relationship and practices (see Cheong & Miller, 2000), including national park planning and management processes and practices (Rutherford, 2011).

This study aims to combine the normative and descriptive elements of governance. Different national parks and their planning processes have specific historical and cultural backgrounds and structures of knowledge, power, and related practices, which all are integrated to meanings and values given to nature and nature conservation. Looked on from a governance and social constructionist approach, planning documents do not simply describe the reality, but are active and contextual in creating and shaping it and the related practices (Prior, 2003).

Research material consists of 42 official planning documents of Finnish national parks, including more than 2,400 pages of text. First, the research

material includes management and land use plans of 33 national parks, which were in use in 2007 (accepted by the end of the year). Since the plans were written from 1984 to 2007, it was possible to compare them over time and analyze the governance-related changes in the park planning and the potential impact of increasing tourism in the documents. Nine of the plans were published in the 1980s, eight in the 1990s and 16 in the 2000s.

Second, the analysis is based on other planning documents of national parks. The following documents direct the management and land use of all national parks: *The Principles of Protected Area Management in Finland* guidebook (Metsähallitus, 1993, 2002a, 2004a, 2008a; see Metsähallitus, 2000, for English translation), the development plan to improve the conditions for recreation and tourism in Metsähallitus's (2004b) conservation areas, and the report defining the goals of public use in Metsähallitus's (2004c) areas. In addition, the strategies of tourism of national parks written by 2007 were analyzed (Kolin neuvottelukunta, 2006; Metsähallitus, 2001a; Oulangan yhteistoimintaryhmä, 2004).

Content analysis of the planning documents aimed to identify a possible change in the hegemonic, institutionalized (see Hajer, 1995, p. 61) idea of the role of tourism in national parks. To facilitate comparison, all documents were analyzed from three common perspectives: (a) the idea of (protected) nature and nature conservation (e.g., how nature is defined, what kind of nature is worth protecting, what are the goals of protected areas?), (b) the idea of management and land use of national parks (e.g., which human activities are suitable, who has the right to use parks, what kind of interaction parks have with the surrounding area?), and (c) the idea of the role of tourism and recreation in national parks (e.g., how parks may be used in tourism, what is the role of tourism in nature conservation, how conservation is taken into account in tourism, are tourism and nature conservation compatible, how are conflicts prevented?). Each perspective contained 5 to 10 detailed questions which enabled thorough reading and systematic analysis of the plans. In this article, the main focus is on the third perspective.

We started the analysis by gathering the text concerning the detailed questions of each perspective from the plans. The plans were read chronologically to see the changes in park planning during the last decades. The related text was gathered from the plans under each question, and then this more than 150-page-long text was used in the systematic analysis. By reading the text thoroughly, we studied the role defined for tourism in national parks and aimed to understand the background assumptions and ideas of the plans. The main attention was paid not only to the content of the materials (what are the meanings?), but also the form of the materials was analyzed (how are the meanings produced? See Silverman, 2001). The analysis revealed that park planning changed in the 2000s, and therefore, the results focus on that change and include quotes from the documents to illustrate the change. Before the latter part of the 1990s, tourism

was not widely discussed in management and land-use plans that were even less than 30 pages long, while in the 2000s they might be more than 100 pages long.

Study Results

Growth of Tourism

In the planning documents of Finnish national parks, nature conservation is generally set as the most important goal, and natural scientific criteria are defined as primary in the establishment and management of parks: "The conservation function must be given priority, however, therefore all other activities must be adapted so that the conservation aims are not endangered" (Metsähallitus, 2008a, p. 14). This goal has not changed during the last decades (Metsähallitus, 1993, p. 12). In the first decade of the 2000s, however, national parks were defined or contextualized not only as conservation areas but also as regional, national, or even international tourism destinations: for instance, the aim of Nuuksio NP was to develop it "as a valued nature-based tourism destination, whose attraction is based on natural elements" (Metsähallitus, 2006a, p. 28). Aspects of tourism were brought up also in the plans of parks which were not very popular and well-known tourism destinations. For instance, Valkmusa NP, with less than 10,000 yearly visitors, is considered "to also have good chances to become an important nature-based tourism destination" (Metsähallitus, 2002b, p. 22).

The strengthening role of tourism has been influenced by the introduction of new forms of tourism and positively valued terms referring to them (e.g., *sustainable tourism*). Since the end of the 1990s, the concept of *nature-based tourism* was used in the park plans alongside the previously used terms of *outdoor recreation*, *hiking* and *sightseeing* (e.g., Metsähallitus, 1986, p. 1). Nature-based tourism was also included to the goals of park authorities: for instance, in Urho Kekkonen NP the aim of the management and land use was "to integrate the goals of traditional livelihoods, nature conservation, hiking and tourism in a sustainable way" (Metsähallitus, 2001b, p. 8). In the 1980s and 1990s the plans talked about *park visitors* or *hikers*, but in the 2000s they were also called *tourists* and *clients*, which illustrates the change in the management thinking, orientation, and economic role of tourism.

In the 2000s, park authorities started setting numeral goals for tourism development in national parks. Metsähallitus (2004b, pp. 22–23) aimed to increase the total number of park visits 5% annually by 2010, which meant almost 40% growth in visits from 2003 to 2010. This goal was fulfilled in 2006. The intention was to direct the growth of tourism at the most visited areas, such as national parks (Heinonen, 2007, p. 110; Metsähallitus, 2004c). Accordingly, "the most diverse facilities and services are provided in the areas which have, taking into account the whole network of protected areas, the biggest and the most diverse

demand and preconditions to respond to it” (Metsähallitus, 2008a, p. 42). After Metsähallitus (2004b) set the regional goals of visitation numbers for its areas, visitation targets were also expressed in the management and land use plans of national parks; for instance, in Salamajärvi NP “the aim of public use in the planning area is 20 000 annual visits” (Metsähallitus, 2007a, p. 62).

Meanwhile, the definitions of *The Principles of Protected Area Management in Finland* guidebook (Metsähallitus, 1993, 2002a, 2004a, 2008a) became less restrictive regarding tourism development. The guidebook was renewed totally in 2007 (Metsähallitus, 2008a), and the definitions of the role of tourism were revised to a large extent. The older guidebooks (see Hall, 2006, p. 196; Metsähallitus, 2002a, p. 7, 2004a, p. 6) state that utilization of national parks for tourism “is permissible where it does not endanger the achievement of conservation aims,” yet this sentence had been left out from the newer guidebook (Metsähallitus, 2008a). The older guidebooks (Metsähallitus, 2002a, p. 29, 2004a, p. 30) also state that “outdoor pursuits (e.g., downhill skiing, competitive sports and the use of off-road vehicles) which threaten natural features or disturb wildlife or other visitors to an area, which can be practical elsewhere, and whose main purpose is not related to the desire to enjoy the protected area and its natural features” should not be allowed in national parks. This specification was not included in the newer guidebook although nonmotorized travelling remained the basic principle in parks (Metsähallitus, 2008a, p. 45).

In addition, the older guidebooks of Metsähallitus (2002a, p. 31; 2004a, p. 33) state that “hotels and other higher level tourist services, and usually also campsites and caravan sites are to be located outside protected areas.” According to the newer guidebook (Metsähallitus, 2008a, p. 47), however, “it is also possible to build cafeterias or campsites serving hikers, but primarily these kinds of facilities are located outside protected areas.” Small-scale recreational facilities (e.g., resting places, mooring places, open and reservable wilderness huts) and visitor centers may also be built in parks. Exceptions to these general rules usually date back to the era before the establishment of a protected area; for instance, there are downhill-skiing slopes and a hotel in Koli and Pallas-Yllästunturi NPs that occurred before the parks were created.

In the management and land use plans of the 2000s, suitable forms of recreation in national parks were defined more specifically than previously. Due to diversification and technologization of recreational activities, the general principle of nonmotorized travelling was not enough, but the plans defined how various activities which had become popular fitted with parks. For instance, the plan of Nuuksio NP (Metsähallitus, 2006a, pp. 117–118) includes the maps of suitable areas for cycling, horse riding, and rock climbing. The definition of suitable activities has been influenced by the traditional idea of everyman’s right, which allows a free access to the land and waterways and the right to collect natural products. According to the older guidebook of Metsähallitus (1993, p. 38), the public right of access “does not in principle concern

protected areas, which have been reserved for special use.” However, in the last decade this right was also applied to protected areas, although “it is possible to restrict everyman’s rights, such as access, camping or coming ashore” (see Metsähallitus, 2002a, p. 35; 2004a, p. 36; 2008a, p. 43).

In addition to traditional recreational activities, such as hiking and skiing, some newer forms of tourist activities (e.g., horse safaris) have been interpreted to belong to everyman’s right, and, thus, they may be prohibited or restricted in national parks “only if deemed necessary for the conservation of flora and fauna in the area” (Nature Conservation Act, 1096/1996, 18 §). The older guidebooks of Metsähallitus (1993, p. 41; 2002a, p. 30; 2004a, p. 31) require that “careful consideration should be given to the possible effects of visitors cycling, or riding horses, dog-sledges or reindeer-sleighs. If these activities are permitted, they should be directed onto specific routes of their own . . .”. The newer guidebook (Metsähallitus, 2008a, pp. 43, 45) is less restricting, stating that these activities, which belong to everyman’s right, “may however damage nature in the area or disturb other visitors.” Thus, they can be restricted or directed onto specific routes. The position of horse riding in national parks has not been weakened by the Finnish studies indicating ecological impacts of riding, such as erosion and introduction of alien species (e.g., Törn, 2007).

Driving motorized off-road vehicles is not included in the public right of access, but while snowmobiling has become more popular, it has become topical to define its acceptability in national parks. According to the previous guidebook of Metsähallitus (1993, p. 38), “the strictly recreational use of snowmobiles and other off-road traffic is not allowed.” In newer guidebooks (see Metsähallitus, 2002a, p. 38; 2004a, p. 20; 2008a, pp. 45, 61), snowmobiling rights in protected areas were increased by an addition: “Northernmost Lapland is an exception in this respect, as owing to the great extent of the wilderness reserves and protected areas, snowmobile tracts unavoidably pass through these areas.” When Pyhä-Luosto and Pallas-Yllästunturi NPs were extended, previously built snowmobiling routes and tracks were partially left inside the parks. In the management and land use plan of Pyhä-Luosto NP (Metsähallitus, 2007b, p. 50), this decision is justified with tourism: “Due to the length and shape of the park, the total removal of them would have caused excessive problems for tourism.”

Arguments of Regional Development

Since the first national parks were established, local residents in northern Finland and in the archipelago have been granted special rights related to practicing traditional livelihoods (e.g., hunting, fishing, and reindeer herding; Rytteri & Puhakka, 2009). Nevertheless, the recent park plans have reflected much closer connections to the surrounding society, including economic activities. In the 1980s, the current meanings of the national park for local people or

the economic and employment impacts were not really dealt with in the park plans. Outdoor recreation in parks was mainly justified with recreational and educational aspects, attention paid to all citizens instead of local people (e.g., Metsähallitus, 1985). Since the turn of the 2000s, however, the aspects of regional development were increasingly brought up, and tourism was justified with economy and employment in the park plans: “The aim is also to develop conditions for tourism and in that way support the regional economy” (Metsähallitus, 2008b, p. 21). In the management and land use plans of the 2000s, the evaluations of environmental impacts included references to the tourism’s positive impacts on economy, employment, and the image of the area: “The most important economic impact of Pyhä-Luosto National Park is created indirectly via nature-based tourism” (Metsähallitus, 2007b, p. 103). Besides the visitation targets, Metsähallitus (2004b, pp. 71–73, 78–79) set the goals for income and employment effects of nature-based tourism in different parts of Finland.

Consequently, in the last decade the goals of national parks were not solely related to nature conservation or environmental education, scientific research, and outdoor recreation. For instance, the plan of Syöte NP (Metsähallitus, 2006b, p. 22) argues that one goal of the management and land use of the park is to develop means of subsistence for local people by promoting nature-based tourism and reindeer herding. The goals of tourism and other regional development were increasingly taken into account, and the park plans discussed the role of the park as part of a larger tourism region. For instance, the plan of Koli NP (Finnish Forest Research Institute, 2005, p. 6) states that it “aims to take into account the role of Koli National Park in developing a national network of nature-based and cultural tourism and the development goals set by the provincial development strategy of North Karelia” Meanwhile, the connections between parks and stakeholders became closer; for instance, in Koli NP regional development organizations had a chance to influence the importance and resources of development projects, and tourism development in the park (Finnish Forest Research Institute, 2005, pp. 59–60).

While national parks’ connections to the society increased in the first decade of the 2000s, the role of tourism companies in parks also changed in the planning documents. Previously the attitude toward tourism as an economic and private business activity was critical (see Perttula, 2006, p. 57). In the 1980s, the tourism related business activities were only mentioned in the park plans and with almost same words in some plans: “Tourism business using the area of the national park requires a permission from the Forest and Parks Service. These kinds of activities include guided and organised trips and kiosk and cafeteria services. The land is not rented from the national park for these purposes, but facilities in the park can be handed over for the use of tourism business” (see Metsähallitus, 1984, pp. 8–9; 1986, p. 12). Therefore, references to public–private sector interplay or available options for commodification and privatization of certain parts

of national parks were rare: the parks were seen as government managed and operated spaces. In the 1990s, planning documents even suggested restricting tourism business activities in case they prevent achieving the (conservation) goals of the park (e.g., Metsähallitus, 1992, p. 18; 1994, p. 22).

The older guidebooks of Metsähallitus (2002a, p. 40; 2004a, p. 41) argue that “in principle, activities not directly related to an interest in nature which could equally well be practiced elsewhere should be directed to locations outside protected areas.” This restriction, however, has been removed from the newer guidebook (Metsähallitus, 2008a) opening the parks more to commercial activities and public–private sector collaboration reflecting new kind of governance approaches. In the 2000s, the park plans took increasingly a stance on guided (i.e., organized) nature-based tourism and discussed its significance for local economy. Meanwhile, goals related to promotion of tourism business were set; for instance, in Oulanka NP “the aim is to integrate the goals of tourism business and the management and land use of the park so that they support each other as good as possible” (Metsähallitus, 2003, p. 18).

In the first decade of the 2000s, the management and land use plans attempted to support tourism companies and direct their operations according to set goals and principles in national parks. For instance, in Oulanka NP “Metsähallitus increases co-operation with entrepreneurs so that they could take into account the goals of the national park in their operations and while operating in the park follow the principles of Metsähallitus’ environment and quality system” (Metsähallitus, 2003, p. 31). Metsähallitus also built facilities, such as a rental cabin in Hiidenportti NP (Metsähallitus, 2007c, p. 32), which mainly serves tourism companies. Accordingly, the role of Metsähallitus became wider in parks. The policy of denials and restrictions was replaced by the policy of active cooperation in public–private sector relation: “Natural Heritage Services takes a positive stance on promoting nature-based tourism in protected areas, and aims to provide good opportunities for companies to practice their operations” (Metsähallitus, 2008a, p. 45). Metsähallitus started to write various kinds of partnership agreements with entrepreneurs and take part in local and regional projects striving for nature-based tourism development (e.g., Oulangan yhteistoimintaryhmä, 2004, pp. 31–36, 42–44), which improved park authorities’ chances to direct tourism development also in the surrounding areas of parks.

Sustainable Nature-Based Tourism—A Solution to Problem or Legitimatization for Development?

In the first decade of the 2000s, negative impact of tourism was discussed more than previously in the park plans as the evaluation of environmental impact and the analysis of threats directed at national parks were included in the plans. *The Principles of Protected Area Management in Finland* guidebook (Metsähallitus, 2008a, p. 42) argues that “a condition for all recreational use is that it is not in

conflict with the conservation goals of the area,” yet negative impacts of tourism were acknowledged and thus accepted to some extent in parks. Trail erosion was usually defined as the main ecological problem, but in its entirety environmental threats were not considered significant: “the environmental impacts of nature-based tourism are usually so small and local that they are not taken into account in the environmental impacts assessment process in a legal term” (Oulangan yhteistoimintaryhmä, 2004, p. 32). According to the planning documents, the basic premise in parks was that it is possible to direct recreational use to prevent environmental problems; for instance, Urho Kekkonen NP “is managed so that even a significant growth of visitor numbers will not impact harmfully nature or humans’ experiences of going in nature” (see Metsähallitus, 2001b, p. 28; Perttula, 2006, p. 51). Tourism in national parks was managed, for instance, by land-use zoning, building recreational facilities, and guiding visitors; the aim was to direct visitors, facilities, and negative impacts mainly to the recreational zones of parks.

The role of tourism development as an acceptable goal in parks has been influenced by the emergence of the discourse of sustainability. Since the end of the 1990s, the planning documents used the concepts of *sustainable development* and *sustainable tourism* which were applied to national parks. Metsähallitus outlined the *Principles of Sustainable Nature Tourism in Protected areas* (Heinonen, 2007, p. 306; Metsähallitus, 2008a, p. 42) by which it aimed to commit entrepreneurs, tourists, and local stakeholders to decrease harmful impacts of tourism. These nine general principles, including ecological, social, and economic aspects, were implemented by drafting strategies of tourism for national parks.

Instead of preventing all harmful impacts, the aim was to manage tourism in national parks within the limits of acceptable criteria. Metsähallitus developed ecological, social, and economic indicators to measure and monitor the environmental impacts of nature-based tourism, including both national and regional indicators (see Erkkonen & Kajala, 2008). Metsähallitus also drafted a guide to evaluate sustainability and included indicators to park plans (e.g., Oulangan yhteistoimintaryhmä, 2004). The management framework used by Metsähallitus is based on the *limits of acceptable change* approach, which aims to protect certain conditions rather than finding numerical thresholds. In the last decade, thus, the list of completely forbidden activities became shorter in national parks (Metsähallitus, 2008a, pp. 51–52; cf., 2002a, p. 29; 2004a, p. 30), and defining suitable recreational activities was increasingly based on observed environmental impacts: “routes and facilities are scaled according to the demand, environmental impacts and visitor safety” (Metsähallitus, 2008a, p. 51). While resources for management of protected areas have grown during the last decades (Perttula, 2006, p. 49), it has become possible to take into account regional and local characteristics in the planning.

The concepts of sustainable development and sustainable tourism can also be used in the planning documents to legitimate the goal of regional development in

national parks. The implementation of the holistic concept of sustainability requires that not only ecological, but also sociocultural and economic dimensions are equitably taken into account (Swarbrooke, 1999). As economic activities except for tourism are very limited in national parks (Metsähallitus, 2008a, p. 18), development of nature-based tourism is one of the rare ways to implement economic (and partly sociocultural) goals of sustainability. Therefore, by pleading to these dimensions, tourism development can be justified in parks. For instance, the management and land-use plans of Syöte and Salamajärvi NPs (Metsähallitus, 2006b, p. 22; 2007a, p. 46) state that “development of nature-based tourism promotes the goal of social and economic sustainability by creating opportunities for local residents to engage in tourism business.” One of Metsähallitus’s indicators of sustainable nature tourism is customer monetary contribution to the local economy (Erkkonen & Kajala, 2008). If sustainability is looked at only in one protected area, the holistic idea of sustainability implies that ecological dimension cannot be more important than sociocultural or economic aspects. Metsähallitus (2008a, pp. 13–14), however, started to prepare plans for larger provincial areas to be able “to examine for instance the possibilities to develop outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism in a sustainable way as regards natural and cultural environment.”

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of the planning documents from 1984 to 2007 indicated that the role of tourism changed in the Finnish national parks in the first decade of the 2000s. This discursive shift in the park governance implied three kinds of changes for management and policy: (a) the role of tourism increased and became more important than before, (b) tourism was increasingly justified with regional development outcomes, and (c) the goal of socioeconomic development was legitimated with the dimensions and need of sustainability in the park governance (Table 1). Thus, the recent aim in national parks has been to integrate socioeconomic goals of nature-based tourism with ecological goals of conservation by implementing principles of sustainability (i.e., ecological, economic, and sociocultural dimensions), which also reflects the international development (Hammer et al., 2007).

This shift of knowledge “beyond natural science” reflects the changes in power relations toward local communities, regional developers, and tourism operators in national park management and planning. First, the park plans stated goals related to tourism development cautiously: Some national parks were “prepared” for the growth of tourism (e.g., Finnish Forest Research Institute, 2005, p. 11) before the growth was explicitly stated as a goal of parks in the plans (e.g., Metsähallitus, 2007d, p. 58). The plans are bound to established policies and practices of nature conservation, and economy and employment have not traditionally been justifications for conservation in

Table 1. Main Changes in the Modes of Tourism in Finnish National Park Planning in the 2000s.

Modes of tourism in national parks	Main changes in national park planning	Quotations from national park plans
Growth of tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – National parks were defined as tourism destinations – Numeral goals for tourism development were set – Restrictions of tourism activities were slightly decreased 	<i>Metsähallitus aims to create conditions for diverse nature-based tourism by developing the national park (Metsähallitus, 2006b, p. 39)</i>
Arguments of regional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tourism was justified with economy and employment – Goals related to regional development were set – The policy of active co-operation in public-private sector relation started 	<i>To increase the regional economic effectiveness, larger part of the hikers should use services offered by entrepreneurs in the area and leave more money to the area (Metsähallitus, 2007b, p. 72)</i>
Legitimation with the dimensions and need for sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Negative impact of tourism was discussed more – The aim was to manage tourism within the limits of acceptable criteria – Tourism development was justified with economic (and sociocultural) sustainability 	<i>Nature-based tourism based on partnership supports the conservation of the area and does not threaten ecological or social carrying capacity (Metsähallitus, 2006a, p. 62)</i>

Finland. Basically, conservation per se has not been seen as a good business. Along this kind of thinking, the promotion of potential socioeconomic benefits has not been seen as a tool or an outcome for protected areas and their management (Rytteri & Puhakka, 2009). However, new Nature Conservation Act (1096/1996) widened the idea of conservation with the focus on biodiversity. Meanwhile, with the help of new tourism-related concepts referring to *nature* and *sustainability*, tourism as an economic activity became a more acceptable practice in the park governance. The adopted term of *sustainable nature-based tourism* by Metsähallitus for working with tourists *and* the tourism industry reflects this emphasis toward active collaboration in tourism development.

As the role of tourism has increased in Finnish national parks, protection and use of natural environments are not any longer understood as completely contradictory aims, and the juxtaposition of nature and culture (human dimension) has, at least partly, decreased in the planning and management practices of protected areas (see Olwig, 1995). Along the greater emphasis on the goals of

tourism business, the idea of national parks' economic role and close relation to the surrounding society has arisen; the parks have been integrated more deeply into the regional (tourism) economy (see Saarinen, 2007). While the welfare state has weakened in Finland in relative terms, municipalities and provinces have been given a wider responsibility of regional development, and private investments have been seen as a tool to raise economic activity in rural areas which have been forced to develop new livelihoods and ways to use nature (see Järvelä, Jokinen, Huttunen, & Puupponen, 2009).

By setting the goal of regional development in national parks, interests of local residents and economic actors have been taken into account more widely than previously. The implementation of participatory planning has expanded the idea of expertise beyond scientific knowledge (see Raitio, 2008), and further supported the increasing role of tourism initiatives related to parks and their utilization in regional development. Although some aspects of local participation may be seen as a technical processing of the required devolution of power, the socioeconomic benefits of parks for local people have been increasingly stressed, and, therefore, the positive attitudes toward parks have increased on local level in Finland (Rytteri & Puhakka, 2009). Thus, national parks under changing governance toward deepening public–private sector collaboration are functioning as intermediaries between local and national or international interests in both nature conservation and regional development issues (see Saarinen, 2007). This is manifested in the changing emphasis in the planning documents and in the establishment of collaborative formal agreements between Metsähallitus and tourism businesses.

By defining the goals of visitation numbers and economic impacts of nature-based tourism, Metsähallitus has aimed to fulfill the objectives set by the Finnish Parliament and the Ministry of the Environment (2002). Since the 1990s, the development of political climate in Finland has supported the idea to increase market guidance and private interests in the park governance (Rytteri & Puhakka, 2012). Accordingly, the measurement of productivity, efficiency, and economicality has become an integral part of Metsähallitus's (2004b, p. 45) actions in protected areas. The role of national parks as tools for regional development has also become an argument for applying public funding; the need to investment in parks has been justified with the growth of tourism and increasing income and employment effects (see Metsähallitus, 2004b). This increasing pressure on national parks to produce tourism income and to show economic efficiency have turned park authorities toward a business unit kind of management models (see Eagles & McCool, 2002) with ideas and rhetoric of *clients* and *customer segments*, for instance (Metsähallitus, 2010).

The analyzed shift in the normative and descriptive governance manifests the transformed policies and practices of knowledge, power, and management in the Finnish national park planning. In an international context, this discursive shift has been interpreted to reflect the rise of the process of neoliberalist politics

where nature conservation and its' management practices have become more instrumental and market oriented (see Liverman, 2004; McCarthy & Prudham, 2004). The similar conclusions can be drawn here in the context of the Finnish park planning during the past two decades. Neoliberalization of nature can be defined as a process whereby nonhuman phenomena are increasingly subject to market-based systems of management and development (Bakker, 2010; Castree, 2008; Heynen & Robbins, 2005; Rutherford, 2011).

The process of neoliberalization, which is not a total shift but a gradual and internally conflicting transformation (see Peck, 2004) toward commercialization and privatization of nature in national parks, is clearly manifested in the changing emphases of planning documents and the creation of business friendly environments related to the use of protected areas in tourism. While the older guidebooks of Metsähallitus (1993, 2002a, 2004a) set a line between commercial activities and national park spaces, the newer documents Metsähallitus (2008a) not only allow but also encourage commercial valuation and activities inside the parks. Indeed, in the neoliberalized governance the basic premise is that nature can be conserved because of its market value to tourists who are willing to pay to see and experience nature (Duffy, 2008). Thus, economic efficiency and the commodification of nature have become more important while values of consumption and privatization have been included in management procedures of nature conservation. This has resulted in the increase of entrepreneurship inside the national parks, for instance. In addition, when the Finnish Government decided in 2010 to revise the Act of Pallas-Yllästunturi NP to enable the renovation and enlargement of the old hotel which was built before the park, the profitability of the private hotel company was one of the arguments (Rytteri & Puhakka, 2012).

While economic and sociocultural goals have been set for national parks, the aim in the park planning has been to take into account interests of various stakeholders, fulfill several objectives, and decrease conflicts related to the use of parks. 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. Nevertheless, the devolution of power and the recognition of knowledge and reasoning beyond natural sciences and biodiversity with an aim to integrate various goals and values are challenging for management and land use planning in parks.

In the near future, the role of tourism will probably further increase in Finnish national parks and socioeconomic goals and touristic arguments will gain more strength (see Heinonen, 2007, pp. 241–244). Following international examples, Finnish national parks or certain parts of the management structures could even start to operate more like corporations within government and respond more commercially to visitors' needs and wants (see Rutherford, 2011). While tourism development generates financing for the management of protected areas, different areas may even start to compete with each other on visitor numbers. This kind of competition would not have fitted to traditional conservation thinking, but represents a logical outcome of current neoliberal

governance practices referring to lower government interventions, decreasing role of state in resourcing, and new public management with market-oriented and business-friendly approaches in planning. Recently, this has led Metsähallitus (2010) to initiate a branding process of national parks aiming to profile areas in respect to their use and use potential in tourism.

As future management problems in national parks might be caused by the insufficient funding of service provision and tourism operations in parks, different kinds of user fees or voluntary or indirect payment schemes may come up for serious discussion in Finland, especially if the number of parks continues to increase, as it is planned, but governmental budget resourcing remains the same or even decreases. Although this may not happen in near future and have an effect for independent visitors, especially the tourism businesses as financing collaborators for the national park managers may be able to use parks increasingly for their operations. This commercialization and touristic packaging can create income for the park management through licensing but also management expenses and conflicts with independent tourists, recreationists, and local communities. Thus, the role of tourism in national parks and the governance of parks, with questions such as what are acceptable/unacceptable uses and activities and who decides the acceptance and based on what, will raise policy discussions, discursive struggles, and research needs in the future. These issues will also raise questions how national parks (i.e., conserved nature) will be seen by the public and what people expect when entering parks.

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