

## **Names and tales as a source of nature-based tourism development**

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### **The spirit of the site**

The 'spirit' of the site is currently regarded as an important issue in tourism development. It can be seen as an important attraction in nature-based tourism destinations, and even more so in connection to cultural tourism features. Ancient forests or wilderness environments in some national parks may have a special meaning to the visitor; for example they could be seen as holy sites or as a source of scientific interest. The same sites may also be interesting to the visitor because of someone's past visit to the site; this person may have had special motives or a special use for the site. For instance a tourist may be interested in a site because the Tsar of Russia visited an esker and fished on a river or because a famous artist visited a hill for inspiration. After the mental revival experienced when at the site, the artists then created something that is still seen today as very important to the Finnish national culture. These visits to certain places have left memories, which have been registered in the cultural heritage of the people (Sepänmaa 1993). These memories are in the form of names of sites that have been created for the stories which are then told to visitors about the meaning of the site.

For the ancient people the name of a site indicated how much it meant to them. It is easy to see that names of places are a part of the common cultural heritage and of the social capital (Coleman 1990). Names of places transfer a way of thinking and they also teach the younger generation how ancient people lived. The background information behind the name of a place creates extra value when it becomes a tourist attraction. In a typical scenic site the topography and natural elements form the attractions for visitors. This value is expected to increase when the cultural heritage is revealed to the visitor, with the new knowledge combining with the aesthetic experience (Hargrove 1989).

### **Names as symbols of meaning**

The names for places, the tales told about the site, the real factual memories and the carefully created *lume-imago*, have introduced an extremely valuable social capital resource for tourism development. The name of the place has been created for a particular site, this can be for a house or a place in the terrain. The name of the place is an expression that individualises the site and distinguishes it from the surroundings. It is common that the name created for a place would be a combination of human history and the physical details of the site (see [www.vyh...](http://www.vyh...)2002). It is also typical that a person would settle at a site and then the site would be nominated to him, with oral stories often telling of such happenings. Indeed, the cultural heritage connected to the names of places produced a good motive when the European Year of Building Heritage was introduced in 2002.

The tales told about the historical roots of the sites and the real meanings behind the names of places have inspired people over many centuries to collect the oral heritage of tribes and people. In Finland the Finnish Literature Society (see [www.finlit](http://www.finlit) 2003), has collected this information for over 170 years. Geographical surveys and inventories in connection with the mapping and land-use reforms also contain a vast amount of information about place names. Several private organisations and local heritage associations have opened websites that collect place name data and other associated information electronically (see. [www.sakkola...](http://www.sakkola...) 2003).

The nomenclature can be classified in two main groups: names of places and names of people. There is a strong interaction between these two groups, as the names of places, especially the names of the houses, are names of the people who previously lived there. In the Finnish language family names especially, are names that have come from place names. The concept of a place name can be defined as a 'real name', which includes the meaning of a special site in the terrain. Many of the place names in Finland have been given so far back in the history, that the meaning of the name today is unknown or very difficult to discover. New names have arisen according to new people and new occupations coming to the sites from another culture. The names that have been given to the sites are also important to the community and to those that continue to live there. The hunters, gatherers, fishers, farmers, sailors, businessmen, surveyors, scientists and, more recently, tourists may have given different names to sites (see [www.sakkola...](http://www.sakkola...) 2003).

### **The levels of meaning in cultural tourism**

It is a fact that tourism activities affect social change in the target areas. One important change is the connection with the lifestyle and the meaning of different matters (Hemmi et al. 1987). In connection to cultural tourism tourists are willing to be informed about the local history, cultural specialities and the different approaches used in certain locations. The local people sensitively observe the motives and interests of the tourists and try to respond to their wishes. This interaction can strengthen some of the cultural features and may even change the basic details, therefore improving the selling strategy. This can create a very sensitive development process in which the issues of sustainable tourism are very visible (Ireland 1997).

The names and tales of the local people are a new valuable source for tourist attractions. However, when the local people become accustomed to the demand, the content and the form of attractions may change. The activities, such as traditional singing and playing, may increase, and the rhythm, content and even the language may be changed when the 'customers' become the tourists. The conscious tourist seeks out a real experience but they may not always know if they have found it. When tourism contributes to the harmonisation of cultures, the tourist can find the local Finnish kantele-music playing on a modern electrical instrument, as the musician may think that the tourist prefer it. The traditional social village evenings of the autumn harvest feasts, have seen a new revival as the summer cottage owners are interested in them and tourism developers have become interested in using them as a tourist attraction.

There has been noticeable social change in many local communities. If the model of social change introduced by Allardt & Littunen (1972) is functioning, the idealistic objectives of sustainable cultural tourism will be realised imperfectly in any scenarios (see also Lucas 1993). In the worst scenario the entire local cultural heritage will disappear completely and only the names and occasional tales may continue to live on without there being any connection to the original meaning. The scenario of cultural adaptation creates a mixture of heritages, where the older community members still remember their roots and the meaning of the names and the tales. Although there may be something which is not completely divided between the locals and the tourists, the content or the form of tales can be changed for the tourists. The third scenario, called the conflict scenario, this can produce subcultures with high boundaries and social penalties for the trans-boundary attempts.

Cultural change due to tourism is considered to be asymmetric (Hemmi et al. 1986). Local culture adapts to the tourists far better than the tourists do to the local cultures. Therefore, a hypotheses

about the transfer of names and tales follows the stream of tourism and tourism developers. If the local people keep their names and mythical tales a secret to the visitors, then the tourists will therefore create their own tales and give their own names to the sites. The tourism developers have also been known to create tales in order to increase tourism to the attractions.

Imported cultural meanings are seen as powerful and influential just like the symbols of national identity and historical sites. Local people may give spiritual values to a site, for a number of reasons; maybe they have buried their elders, or before the advent of Lutheran religious belief their tribe may have created a sacrificial site. The local people may also be extremely oriented to utilism. They adapt themselves to mass tourism so that they can appreciate the environment as a source of short term business management. At the same time the same site can be considered as a symbol of national identity, because the artists or politicians have understood it as that or have created it for that purpose. Regardless of its initial rationale for creation, the development process of a tourism site as a national symbol is creating an important social model because of the strong connection it has with the national socialisation process, especially the national education strategy.

### **The development of the meaning during cultural change; case Koli**

A case of this phenomenon is given through the Finnish tourism resort Koli; which is the highest forest hill summit in southern Finland. Koli is a topographical centre-pole of the Finnish population representing the basic Finnish nature landscape, which has four classical natural elements. Today Koli-hill is the core part of the Koli National Park founded in 1991 in order to protect the geological structure, the old-growth boreal forests and the cultural heritage of the ancient Finnish slash-and-burn agriculture used in the boreal forests. Koli-hill is the viewpoint for the Finnish National Landscape. The hills have also carried important spiritual values for the people living around this site since the last glaciation. The story of the names of this region is often combined with the two native tribes, which were occupying the same region at the same time.

A millennium ago there were the ancient Lake-Saame people living around the Pielinen lake basin around Koli hills (Kilpeläinen et al. 1954), they were hunters, gatherers and fishermen. Their main sources of food that they depended on for their livelihood were reindeer and salmon. These Lake-Saame people used the words *kole* (= gold) and *kollid* (= to visit) (Sammallahti et. al. 1993). An ancient tale tells that the name Koli was created in association with gold or an object with high value; it was seen as a very valuable site. Nobody lived there, but the site was a target for regular spiritually motivated visits that were carried out with respect. Another tale tells of the cave of shaman which is situated on the hill-side of Koli hill, today it is called paradoxically the *Pirunkirkko* (=Devils church), people used to visit the cave to honour the spirits of nature and seek their way to higher knowledge.

At the same time the ancient Karelian-Finns lived in the same region around the Pielinen lake basin, but they called the Koli hills by the name *Mustarinda* (= Black Hills). This name was written on the map of Karelian-Finns in the year 1650, at the time that they were under the regime of the orthodox Novgorod nation in the Pielisjärvi and the Käkisalme region (Saloheimo 1976). The Karelian-Finns had cultural and economical connections to the core Finnish population on the shores of the Baltic Sea via the waterway of lake Saimaa. In the language of Baltic-Finns *musta* had the meaning of dead ones or meant ghost and *rinda* meaning a hill (Kokla et.al. 1972). *Mustarinda* was associated with the hilly site of departed souls, the “hill of the dead ones”, the site which people respected also created a form of fear. The ancient tales tell of the sacrificial traditions and offerings held for the spirits of the hill in order for a favourable future or greater knowledge about matters of importance. The sacrificial areas such as the *Uhrihalkeama* (=“sacrificial crack in the rock”) are still available to visitors as a protected cultural site within the National Park. The tales of the sacrificial traditions were told and collected as late as the year 1884 (Nimimerkki “r” 1884), about 10 years before any tourists started visiting the Koli hills.



Figure 1. The Uhrihalkeama – Sacrificial crack in the rock of Koli Hill. (Photo: Metla – Ismo Hyttinen).

Around the year of 1750 the Swedish kingdom conquered the Black Hills under the regime of the Lutheran protestant religion and western civilisation, and the name of the area was rewritten. The name *Koli* was introduced to the official papers (Saloheimo 2000), but the meaning was completely different from that of the Lake-Saame period. In the Swedish-Finnish community the core word *koli* was used in association with a number of concepts such as fire, fights, vagabonds, bogeymen, outlaws and outlying district or colonising remote frontiers. The name *Koli* was the symbol of the colonisation of this remote and inhospitable region, a task that was not completed without severe cultural conflicts, tales from this time are still told by people living today.

The main actor during this period of new occupation, was a strong Finnish personality called Jaakko Stenius, also known by the name of “Korpi-Jaakko” (=“Jacob of backwoods”). He represented the religious and earthy power of the Swedish kingdom on this region (Cederberg 1928). He conquered the Black Hills, won over the old wizards of the region with spiritual and physical terror, and then settled on the land and he brought over working farmers in order to start

building up the western civilisation through educating the people to read and write. Today the elders of Koli community are still telling the tales of this cultural collision, where local wizards and the new vicar were testing their forces like the duel of Väinämöinen and the Joukahainen in the Kalevala (Lönnroth 1849).

During the Finnish National Romantic 'Karelianism' period, which was at the end of the 1800s, the name *Koli* gained the public's attention again when the Finnish nationalists were seeking and creating the symbols for the Finnish identity. The *Koli* hills were then nominated as the symbol of the Finnish national identity in the form of solid white quartzite rock and the other basic natural elements in Finland (Aho 1893). The image also included the historical tales of the spirit of the mountain and the sacrifices that were made to the spirits of the nature when people were seeking a prosperous future.

The renowned and meaningful name of Koli and also the tales around it triggered the interests of early tourism developers, which was remarkably supported by the Finnish authorities. When the lifecycle of Koli tourism reached the phase of mass-tourism, at the end of 1970s (Saarinen & Lovén 2000), the cultural heritage was nearly forgotten and the spirit of the site was remarkably devalued. The tourists however were still interested in the name of *Koli*, but the tourism entrepreneurs had created new simplistic explanations for it. For example *Koli*'s name came from the sound of coins (*koli-koli* or *clink-clink*). This tale was created as it would increase tourism to the area, for example the tourists could drop the coins into the sacred crack in the rock as a ritual offering to the spirits.

## Summary

Cultural tourism exploits local cultural heritage in many ways. The demands for the experiences include the tourist's interest to find a deeper knowledge into the meanings of the local names of places and tales. The basic problem created when developing culture-oriented tourism is the issue of sustainability. There are so many examples of severe erosion of culture, when cultural heritage comes into connection with mass tourism. Another issue is the process which the tourism industry is now creating; the new heritage of the present tales.

In Finland several good examples can be found on sustainable and non-sustainable development processes which concern the local cultural heritage. Culture itself depends on the tribes and the people occupying the site. Especially on the frontier areas, where there have been several occupations and rapid cultural changes, it is difficult to say what the original native culture actually is and what the culture of the conqueror or the new culture is concerned with. The tourism industry can introduce cultural phenomenon such as names and tales, which for the customer can be very difficult when trying to distinguish which ones are real. A case study on the different meanings of the names is presented for *Koli*; today this is the name of one of the oldest nature and cultural tourism resorts in Finland.

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