

Sustainability in Ylläs: one focus, various interpretations

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Abstract

Purpose – Stakeholders have divergent views concerning sustainability in the development of tourism in Ylläs. The danger of these differences is that it can result into a conflict that could jeopardize the fragile ecosystem and livelihood of the locals. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore how the quest for authenticity is discursively related to the interpretations of sustainability in tourism, based on a mix of qualitative and quantitative research.

Design/methodology/approach – This was an empirical study, based on a mix of quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (interviews) research methods.

Findings – Despite the different interpretations, almost all stakeholders agree on “sustainability” in the development of tourism, since it is the authentic nature that attracts tourists. Accordingly, the search for authenticity could contribute to the sustainability of the tourist destination Ylläs in the long term. Caution is asked though for the enclave-like construction of tourist destinations, e.g. Ylläs, that currently differentiate from their surrounding peripheries.

Practical implications – Despite the different interpretations, almost all stakeholders agree on “sustainability” in the development of tourism, since it is the authentic nature that attracts tourists. Accordingly, the search for authenticity could contribute to the sustainability of the tourist destination Ylläs in the long term. It is suggested to continue research regarding authenticity in practice.

Social implications – The conditions under which sustainability could become a consideration for tourism development in Ylläs are linked to sustaining tourism business, the most important source of income for Ylläs.

Originality/value – Can the quest for authenticity, insofar as it remains a significant motive in contemporary tourism, contribute to the sustainability of tourist sites? Destinations that actively and continuously discourage tourism on ecological grounds are the most attractive ones for MacCannell’s authenticity-seeking tourist. Considerations regarding sustainability and development in the context of ecological vulnerable and economic valuable regions clash. It is with regard to such areas that the paths of the sustainability and authenticity discourses cross (Cohen, 2002).

Keywords Tourism, Sustainable tourism development, Authenticity, Sustainable tourism, Sustainability in tourism

Paper type Research paper

Received 8 January 2019
Revised 10 May 2019
29 September 2019
Accepted 18 October 2019

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Introduction

Based on MacCannell’s argument “that moderns seek authenticity outside modernity” (Cohen and Cohen, 2012, p. 2179), Cohen (2002) wonders whether the quest for authenticity, insofar as it would remain a significant motive in contemporary tourism, contributes to or detracts from the sustainability of tourist sites, amenities and attractions. He concludes that it is necessary to clarify the conditions under which sustainability can become a primary consideration in tourism development first. Hunter (1997) argues that the thoughts of sustainability become more important the less desirable it is to develop it due to the ecological importance of that area. Such areas are normally perceived as highly unique and authentic, as, for instance, “nature of national or international importance” (Hunter, 1997, p. 862). It is with regard to such areas that the paths of the sustainability and authenticity discourses cross (Cohen, 2002).

Despite all discussion in tourism studies regarding authenticity, the sociological discourse of authenticity still dominates contemporary tourism (Harrison, 2017). According to Hunter (1997), destinations that actively and continuously discourage tourism on ecological grounds are the most attractive ones for MacCannell's (1973) authenticity-seeking tourist. As a result, considerations regarding sustainability and development in the context of ecological vulnerable and economic valuable regions clash (Cohen, 2002):

The important point to note is that such areas tend to become particularly valuable, not merely in ecological or cultural terms, but also in purely economic ones – as potential objects of development by the tourist industry. It is therefore to be expected that considerations of sustainability and development will clash most intensely in such sensitive and valuable areas. (Cohen, 2002, p. 270)

The concept of sustainability in the context of tourism has been interpreted and reinterpreted in different ways, based on the interests of a person or institute (see e.g. McCool and Moisey, 2009; McDonald, 2009; Mowforth and Munt, 2009; Jamal *et al.*, 2013; Gaillie, 1955–1956 in Hall *et al.*, 2015). The danger of using different interpretations regarding sustainable tourism, however, can result not only into a certain degree of distrust among stakeholders, but even into a conflict. The lack of consensus on the meaning of sustainability in the context of contemporary tourism has become a major pitfall in the development of sustainable tourism. The different interpretations are the result of diverse perceptions of tourism within a continuum of two world views: on the one hand the view of companies and their focus on business, on the other hand the view of organizations and their focus on society and/or environment (see e.g. Page and Connell, 2009; McCool and Moisey, 2009; Jamal *et al.*, 2013). McCool and Moisey (2009) explain that three interpretations regarding sustainability currently dominate the development of sustainable tourism: sustaining tourism, sustainable tourism and what should tourism sustain. The first view, sustaining tourism, focuses on building and managing tourism enterprises that can maintain themselves over a long period of time. In this view the word sustainable is linked to the maintenance of promotional programs that ensures that the number of tourists who visit a destination increases. The social goal is to maintain the tourism business. The second view, sustainable tourism, contains small-scale tourism which is in balance with its social and natural environment, by reducing the negative impacts of tourism development. However, this view ignores large-scale tourism and is not able to reduce the negative impacts of tourism in the context of mass tourism. The final view, what should tourism sustain, uses tourism as a tool for social and economic development. Tourism in this meaning is applied as a method to accumulate income and government revenue, which can later be used for or invested in other tools for development. In this view tourism has not to be small scale, since tourism forms a part of a broader policy in order to create a more sustainable society.

Finnish Lapland is a peripheral, sparsely populated area in Finland which contains several fragile ecosystems. In this province paths to support the regional economic development and local well-being have been sought within tourism to counter the declining economies of agriculture, forestry and reindeer herding (Kulujärvi, 2017). This is in line with what Hunter regarding ecological fragile areas and the development of tourism in 1997 predicted. According to the regional government in the province of Lapland, however, “tourism is developed ecologically, socially and culturally in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. This ensures that future generations, too, have the chance to enjoy natural experiences in Lapland”. At the same time, according to research (Tuulentie and Mettiäinen, 2007; Kulujärvi, 2017) the tourism actors in the tourism destination Ylläs have divergent views and desires concerning tourism development. As research has pointed out, although the national government and local municipalities have the role of both being a supervisor and a promotor of an economy, the latter role tends to dominate in the development of tourism (see e.g. Hall, 1999; Dredge and Jamal, 2013). “Tourism governance via public-private partnerships seems insufficient in its current form to guarantee that non-economic goals are sufficiently taken into account in destination communities” (Kulujärvi, 2017, p. 43). Saarinen (2004), Saarinen and Wall-Reinius (2019) continues that this kind of tourism development often results in enclave-like resorts that differentiate from their surrounding peripheries. This creates challenges for implementing sustainable development through tourism in among others, northern sparsely populated areas such as Ylläs. Indeed, in the case of the tourist destination Ylläs, the locality has started to express that they want to stop the growth of

the tourism industry in Ylläs. The increasing number of tourists increases the level of concern among local people regarding environmental and cultural issues. In the earlier stages of tourism development, the tourism industry in Ylläs was in the hands of locals. It was more a hobby than serious business. With the help of political investments though, the enlargement of the tourism industry happened almost suddenly in the experience of the locals (Tuulentie and Mettiäinen, 2007). According to Kulujärvi (2017) due to the attraction of non-local investors to the region of Ylläs, the voices of the local inhabitants got overruled by the more powerful actors from outside. The danger of this situation is that various interpretations regarding sustainability can eventually result in distrust among, or even conflict between, different stakeholders. This would jeopardize the sustainable development of tourism in Ylläs in the long term and with that the protection of the fragile ecosystem as well as the livelihood of the inhabitants.

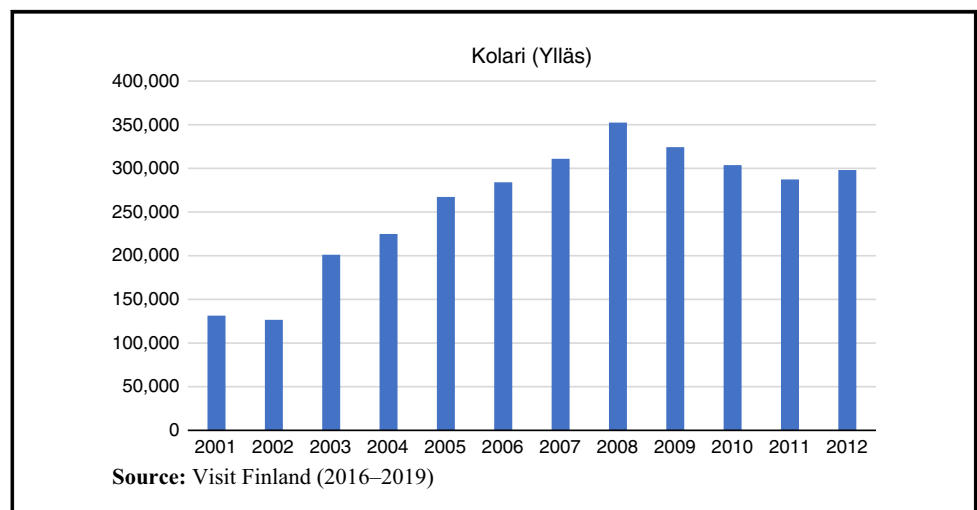
At the same time, however, Cohen (2002) thinks that the search for authenticity in contemporary tourism can not only detract from, but can also contribute to the sustainability of tourist sites, amenities and attractions, especially in peripheral regions, e.g. Finnish Lapland. Despite all discussions regarding authenticity, in case it is assumed that the search for authenticity in contemporary tourism is indeed a significant motive for the authenticity-seeking tourist to travel to an ecological vulnerable and economic valuable region, e.g. Ylläs in Finnish Lapland, how is, with regard to the various interpretations regarding sustainability, that search for authenticity discursively related to “sustainability” in the development of tourism in peripheral and ecological fragile areas, e.g. Ylläs? (Figure 1)

Theory

The discourse of authenticity dominates contemporary tourism (Harrison, 2017). Although, among others, Harrison (2017) discusses the search for authenticity in contemporary tourism, many scholars assume that tourists are in search of authenticity that contrast their daily lives at home during their travels: it is their motivation to travel to pristine environments and primitive cultures (Harrison, 2017): “In many people’s minds the past, authenticity and real experiences can still be found on the peripheries of the modern world, where nature, wilderness, and indigenous or other cultural groups untouched by modernity are situated” (Saarinen, 2004b, p. 438). The discussion about the meaning of authenticity in the context of tourism, however, continues (see e.g. Cohen and Cohen, 2012; Singh, 2012).

Although the concept of authenticity is widely used, its vagueness has also been noted. The concept of “authenticity” in tourism has been interpreted and reinterpreted in various ways regarding its nature, its construction and its experience (see e.g. Chhabra, 2010; Cohen and

Figure 1 Overnight stays Ylläs 2001–2012



Cohen, 2012). Wang (1999), e.g., concluded that the conventional concept of authenticity, which was related to the museum usage, could not always be related to tourist motivations or experiences in combination with, for example, visiting friends or beach holidays. These tourism activities had nothing to do with the museum usage of authenticity. Wang argued that authenticity actually “[...] refers to the authenticity projected onto toured objects by tourists or tourism producers in terms of their imagery, expectations, preferences, beliefs, powers, etc.” (Wang, 1999, p. 352). In other words, authenticity within this concept is in fact symbolic instead of “genuine” and is socially constructed rather than concerned with the establishing the origins of an object. In addition to these objectives (museum usage) and the subjective (socially constructed) concepts of authenticity, Wang (1999) also described a third concept. The first two concepts, objective and subjective authenticity, are both object related, while existential authenticity, Wang’s (1999) third option, is activity related, and “[...] refers to a potential existential state of Being that is to be activated by tourist activities. [...] Existential authenticity can have nothing to do with the authenticity of toured objects” (p. 352). In other words, existential authenticity has nothing to do with the objective (museum usage) or the subjective (social construction) of a tourism product. It is all about the existential state of being which is to be activated by tourist activities.

The same goes for sustainability. Even though the concept of sustainability is widely used, the differences between interpretation have been noted, based on the interests of people or institutes (see e.g. McCool and Moisey, 2009; McDonald, 2009; Mowforth and Munt, 2009; Jamal *et al.*, 2013; Gaillie, 1955–1956 in Hall *et al.*, 2015). The more economic-oriented sustainability discourse was formed in the 1990s, as soon as the message of sustainability was presented to a larger public. The debate shifted from ecological to humanitarian and cultural topics: until the 1990s, sustainability was mainly linked to the preservation of nature, also for future generations. From the 1990s, sustainability became a concept that could be viewed from opposite perspectives: on the one hand, the economy is something that must be preserved at all costs, on the other hand, ecological sustainability is the most important idea. In this ideology, nature is more important than the economy (Page and Connell, 2009). As a result of this, the changed view regarding the concept of sustainability gave governments and tourism developers the opportunity to define sustainable tourism not only as “small-scale,” but also as “large-scale” (see e.g. Jamal *et al.*, 2013; Ateljević, 2014). This economic-oriented discourse of sustainability was in contrast to the more ecological-oriented sustainability discourse that was initiated in the 1960s and 1970s by biologists, e.g. Rachel Carson. Initially, sustainability focused on the conservation of nature. Nowadays, that conservation of nature can also be used for the economic development of local people especially in peripheral areas (Jamal *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, the meaning of sustainability in the context of tourism development varies, depending on the interests of the participating stakeholders. This is also what McCool and Moisey (2009) detected in their research. As already described, the three interpretations among stakeholders that dominate in the development of tourism are: sustaining tourism, sustainable tourism and what should tourism sustain.

Study region

The development of tourism in the province of Lapland as it is known today was a strategic choice of the Finnish Government (Saarinen, 2003). The idea was that tourism would have a positive economic and social impact: tourism would introduce new sources of income for especially people in peripheral regions, e.g. the province of Lapland (Saarinen, 2003; Kauppila *et al.*, 2009). It started with small-scale tourism among host families in the 1930s, but got stimulated by the Finnish Government after the Second World War. With Finland’s Tourism Strategy to 2020, the government presented a strategy to increase tourism in Finland in general and more specific, in Lapland. The reason was that employment in the traditional industries in Finland, e.g. forestry and the metal industry, had declined from 158,900 employed persons in agriculture, forestry and hunting in 1995 to 120,000 in 2008 and from 73,300 employed persons in the metal industry in 1995 to 57,900 in 2008. Employment in tourism in Finland at the same time had increased by 37 percent from 1995 to 2008. Tourism had become a nationally significant export sector and provider of employment (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2010).

The destination Ylläs is located in the municipality of Kolari which is a peripheral region at the national scale. It is a municipality of 3,885 residents, with an additional 2,292 second homes in 2013 (Kulujärvi, 2017). Kolari depends on tourism. In 2011, direct tourism income represented 48 percent of the total turnover of all local incomes (Satokangas, 2013). Today, the development of tourism is clearly not equally concentrated in the municipality of Kolari: most jobs in tourism are located in Ylläs. In 2009, there were 126 enterprises in Ylläs (Kauppila, 2011), the majority of them were small enterprises. In Ylläs the population is growing, unlike elsewhere in the municipality. The unemployment rate in Kolari was 14.9 percent in 2013, which is above the national average (Kulujärvi, 2017). Villages in the southern parts of Kolari primarily live from agriculture, forestry and reindeer herding (Kulujärvi, 2017).

The tourist destination Ylläs was one of the fastest growing tourist centers in Lapland in terms of turnover compared to other tourist centers in Lapland. That positive development was the result of continuous land use planning, operational strategies and development investments made by the municipality. New development was boosted in Ylläs by the opening of a new scenery road in 2006 which also promoted other tourism related investment projects, e.g. more accommodation facilities (Regional Council of Lapland, 2011). The tourist destination is situated in the north of Lapland and claims to have the cleanest air and the truest nature of Lapland (Ylläs Travel Information, 2018). “Quietness” and “peace” are examples of words tourists associate Ylläs with (Jokinen and Tyrväinen, 2013; Cornelisse, 2018). Together with the Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park, the seven mountains and Ylläs Sport Resort, the villages Äkäslompolo and Ylläsjärvi form the tourist destination Ylläs. The area has a capacity of over 23,000 beds. The two villages together count 900 inhabitants and the local economy is mainly based on tourism (Tuulentie, 2009; Kulujärvi, 2017). The peak year of tourism development in Ylläs was 2008 with approximately 350,000 overnights (Figure 2). In 2016, Ylläs experienced another boom in tourism, as registered overnight stays by international tourists increased with more than 32 percent compared to the previous year (Table I). In 2018, Ylläs counted 332,861 overnight stays (Figure 3). A little over half of the overnights come from domestic markets and the biggest international markets are UK, Switzerland, France and Germany (House of Lapland, 2019).

Figure 2 Overnight Stays Ylläs 2016–2018

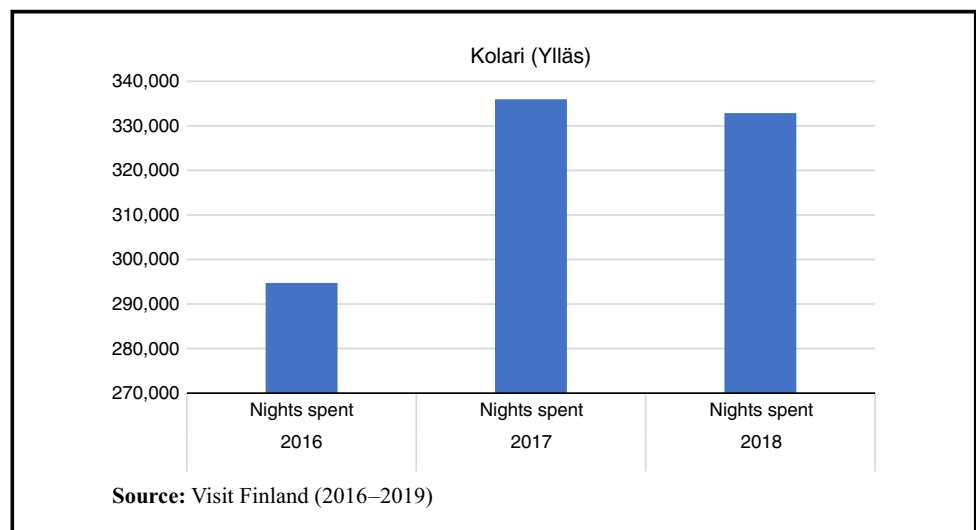
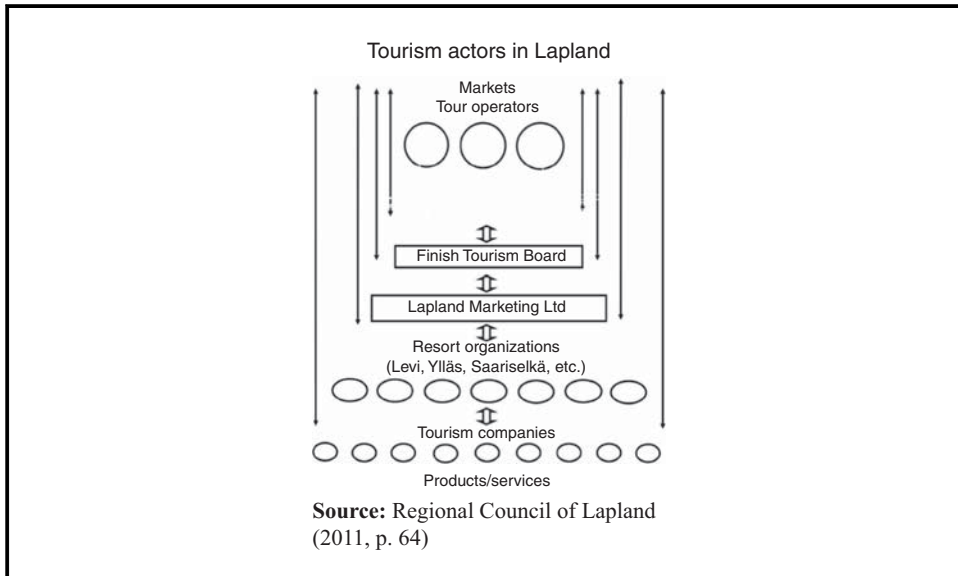


Table I Change of nights spend in Ylläs foreign tourists (Visit Finland, 2016–2019)

		2016
		Change of nights spend, %
Kolari (Ylläs)	Foreign	32.1

Figure 3 Tourism actors in Lapland



Today, Ylläs is one of the leading winter tourism destinations in Finland. However, it has not grown as intensively as some other resorts in Lapland. Ylläs has a reputation of a more quiet and less urban-like destination compared to some other resorts in Lapland, e.g. Levi. The main tourism activities in Ylläs for domestic tourists are cross-country as well as downhill skiing. For international tourists, snowmobile and husky tours are the main activities (Kulujärvi, 2017; Cornelisse, 2018). Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park is a popular outdoor recreation destination. Yet, the fell nature is sensitive to negative impacts of tourism. As a result, the Regional Council of Lapland (2011) noted that it is important to pursue strategic long-term planning and to take sustainable development into consideration in all tourism development efforts. Meanwhile, the stakeholders have divergent views regarding sustainable tourism, with on the one side non-local investors and on the other side locals (Kulujärvi, 2017). According to Kulujärvi, there are two pathways regarding to the development of tourism in Ylläs: the dominant, strongly growth-focused pathway, and the alternative one. This observation of Kulujärvi (2017) fits the conclusion of, among others, Page and Connell (2009), McCool and Moisey (2009) and Jamal *et al.* (2013), that sustainability can be viewed from two opposing perspectives: economic vs ecological orientated. This is also the case in Ylläs.

Research methods

In light of the research question, this study uses a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection and an analysis within a case study that stands for the systematic collection of enriched and detailed information about a social setting or group, in order to be able to understand how a group acts and functions. This approach involves researching a contemporary phenomenon in a natural situation (Berg, 2004), such as how the search for authenticity is discursively related to the interpretations of sustainability in the development of tourism in peripheral regions, e.g. Ylläs.

In order to be able to manage the development of tourism in Finnish Lapland, the Regional Council of Lapland (2011) created an overview of the different tourism actors in Lapland (p. 64). Based on this overview of tourism actors in Finnish Lapland, it was determined who the tourism actors in the development of tourism in Ylläs were (Figure 3). The objective of the fieldwork was to obtain data that could not be collected via desk research.

Three kinds of data were used: documentation, in-depth interviews and questionnaires. The fieldwork was conducted in Ylläs divided over two visits: 2012 (two weeks) and 2014 (two weeks). The visits included in-depth interviews that provided significant materials for the study. In-depth interviews were conducted with 21 stakeholders (Table II), e.g. owners and

Table II An overview of the interviews

Local tourist organizations	Uniqueness, authenticity of Ylläs, why should/do tourists visit Ylläs, what is sustainability, what are examples of sustainability in the context of Ylläs	1 interview 2012 1 interview 2014
Local entrepreneurs	Uniqueness, authenticity of Ylläs, why should/do tourists visit Ylläs, what is sustainability, what are examples of sustainability in the context of Ylläs	7 interviews 2012 10 interviews 2014
Ski instructors	Uniqueness, authenticity of Ylläs, why should/do tourists visit Ylläs, what is sustainability, what are examples of sustainability in the context of Ylläs	2 interviews 2014
International tourists	Uniqueness, authenticity of Ylläs, why did you want to visit Ylläs, what are examples of sustainability in the context of Ylläs	10 interviews in 2014

employees of local tourist organizations, inhabitant of Ylläs, Ylläs Travel Association and tourists. All interviews were conducted in English or Dutch (since the researcher speaks both). Interviews lasted for at least 1 h and were recorded with permission and later transcribed for analysis and quotation. The interviews took place at several offices of travel organizations or in a local coffee bar in Äkäslompolo or Ylläsjärvi. The interviews covered topics related to the uniqueness of the tourism destination Ylläs, why should tourists visit Ylläs, why do they visit Ylläs or what attracts them to visit Ylläs, what sustainability is and what makes Ylläs sustainable according to the respondents. Finally, questionnaires were created and distributed in order to measure the interpretations of sustainability among local entrepreneurs/employees ($n = 68$) and inhabitants ($n = 114$). Entrepreneurs/employees were asked which of the statements, based on the literature of McCool and Moisey (2009), fitted sustainable tourism in Ylläs best. Local inhabitants were asked to (strongly) (dis)agree with statements about the impact of tourism development on: the contribution of the economic well-being, the conservation of the local culture and the protection of nature in Ylläs. Local inhabitants were also asked to select three images that would explain why international tourists visit Ylläs. The images presented were the result of an analysis of which images were posted online by international tourists after their holiday in Ylläs. The results were obtained after an analysis of the images “Lapland” on the websites Flickr, Zoover and Tripadvisor in 2013. In total, 12 categories were noticed: northern lights, cross-country skiing, snowboarding, reindeers, huskies, ice hotel, campfire, snowmobiling, Santa Claus, temperature and Sámi clothing. The purpose of the samples, however, was not to conduct a large-scale representative survey. The survey was one fragment of the empirical study: although the outcomes of the questionnaires could be considered as a good indication, the results cannot be considered as representative. In addition, all samples were convenience samples.

Results

Finnish tourism board and Lapland marketing

In the late 1980s, the mining industry in Kolari, the municipality in which Ylläs is located and which is a peripheral region at the national scale, closed down and caused unemployment. As a result, tourism was selected as a main source of income to be developed in this region. Tourism investments in Kolari received 50 percent subsidization from the Finnish Government in the 1980s, the period in which tourism grew intensively in Ylläs (Kulujärvi, 2017): “In the political debates in the Kolari municipality, the tourism economy is often presented as a coherent economic path for regional development” (Kulujärvi, 2017, p.49). In 2015, the Finnish Government presented another roadmap for growth and renewal in Finnish tourism in general. The aim of this strategy was to make Finland the number one holiday destination in Northern Europe. The reason to invest in tourism was because tourism had become increasingly important for the Finnish economy: “Tourism has major employment impacts and the industry has a balancing effect on regional development in Finland” (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2010, p. 5). The direct economic impact in 2012 on the province of Lapland, for example, was €595m and 5,000 jobs (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2015). In Ylläs, more than 90 percent of the inhabitants today depend on tourism (Tuulentie, 2009; interview manager Destination Lapland, 2014).

Every province in Finland has its own Regional Council that stands for the social and economic well-being of the inhabitants of its province. The Regional Council of Lapland is a regional

cooperation between the different municipalities and manages the national development program, derived from the subsidies awarded by the Finnish Government and the European Union. In 2011, the Regional Council of Lapland indicated that it had the ambition to become the largest winter sports destination in Europe, in the field of sustainable nature and experience tourism. According to the Regional Council (2011), climate change would ensure that northern Europe would become more attractive for travelers, since the cities in the South would become too hot to visit in summer. Furthermore, climate change would also influence consumer behavior on the long term. Ecology has for that reason become an important part of competition in tourism, “green tourism” has proven itself as a profitable form of tourism: “Ecologically sustainable tourism has become more popular” (Regional Council of Lapland, 2011, p. 22).

Especially for regions such as Lapland, tourism has become an important source of income (García-Rosell and Mäkinen, 2012). After the Second World War, the first major wave of migration arose from the north in Finland to the south and to neighboring Sweden, where the growing industries urgently needed laborers. Because of this migration, Lapland was the province with the largest loss of population in the whole of Finland. In the 1980s and 1990s, the population in Lapland declined for a second time. The small villages in the province that arose in the nineteenth century were empty, and young people moved away (Lähteenmäki, 2006). At the same time, the number of jobs in tourism increased during that period, since major investments were done in order to promote tourism in this province, in the hope of keeping the area occupied (Hakkarainen and Tuulentie, 2008). Tourism companies became the only employers in the private sector and the number of inhabitants in the two villages in Ylläs grew steadily from 200 inhabitants in 1985 to 300 in 1995 and 750 in 2010 (Tuulentie, 2009). “In the villages of Ylläsjärvi and Äkäslompolo, the population is growing, unlike elsewhere in the municipality” (Kulujärvi, 2017, p. 47).

Each province in Finland has its own Regional Council that stands up for the economic well-being of the province. The municipalities in question come together in that council. In the case of Lapland, the council developed a vision with the objective to increase tourism throughout Lapland throughout the year. At the moment, more than 70 percent of the tourists visit Lapland during winter. Tourism should continue to increase trade and incomes in Lapland, as well as the number of non-seasonal jobs (Øian *et al.*, 2018). That seasonality is a major uncertainty in the development of tourism (Saarinen, 2003). The province tries to reduce that uncertainty. Consequently, the Regional Council of Lapland developed the Lapland Tourism Strategy to determine the vision and goals and to secure sustainable growth: the main theme was the development of tourism centers that could function as engines for further development in the region, but tourism needed to be developed ecologically, socially and culturally in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. The reason was: “Lapland’s nature offers opportunities for experiences” (2011, p. 27).

Yet, a few years later the municipality started the discussion to expand the current mining near the airport of Kittilä and Ylläs (interview Ylläs Travel Association, 2014). In September 2015, however, most inhabitants of Ylläs experienced great relief when they received the news that the mining company had gone bankrupt. After all, 90 percent of the inhabitants of Ylläs works in tourism and over 92 percent of the questioned inhabitants in this specific research, agreed on the statement that “tourism is important for the community of Ylläs” (see paragraph “Inhabitants of Ylläs” – Table VII). The mining license was immediately taken over by a local family in Ylläs. It is expected that the discussion about mining in this environment will be resumed at the earliest in 2023, depending on the further economic developments worldwide (interview manager Lapland Destination, 2014).

This indicates that the government, in cooperation with the Regional Council of Lapland, uses this policy to interpret McCool and Moisey’s (2009) “what should tourism sustain.” Sustainability in the development of tourism is dominated by a further social and economic development in the province, and with that, also in Kolari municipality and in Ylläs. The tourism strategy secures sustainable growth in the region: it focuses on the development of tourism centers that need to function as engines for further development, such as enclave-like resorts that differentiate from their surrounding peripheries though. Something Saarinen already warned for in 2004. Consequently, the unemployment in the southern part of the municipality of Kolari is a lot higher compared to the unemployment in Ylläs (Kulujärvi, 2017).

Resort organization Ylläs travel association

Ylläs Travel Association is at the level of Resort organizations and is managed by Lapland Marketing. Lapland Marketing provides the marketing of the province of Lapland and is managed by the Finnish Tourism Board. The objective of Ylläs Travel Association is to bring entrepreneurs together, e.g. 2 lift companies and 170 member companies, to conduct joint marketing and to collaborate with the rest of the region. The organization represents most tourism companies in Ylläs, but not all companies (Tuulentie, 2009; Kulujärvi, 2017).

A manager of a travel agency in Ylläsjärvi (interview, January 2014) tells that the problem with this Resort Organization is that there are more than 150 organizations in the region, some of which are very large, such as the Lapland Hotels and the ski companies, together with the small family businesses with one or five employees. The differences in visions and interests are big. An example is Sport Resort Ylläs, a resort that is located just outside the two villages, but which is part of the tourist product Ylläs. Sport Resort Ylläs wants to build more accommodations and facilities, and wants to make use of that side of the mountain which is still protected (interview Ylläs Travel Association, 2014). This is also what Kulujärvi (2017) in her research in Ylläs noted regarding the strongly growth-focused pathway. Together with both in-migrant and native-born tourism actors as well as large and small enterprises, it is their aim to intensify destination growth. This aim is presented in a master plan that consists of 19,000 new bed places around the mountain area (interview owner travel agency Äkäslompola, January 2014; Kulujärvi, 2017). Sustainability takes in a central role in this plan. Nature will be mainly left alone or integrated. After all, nature is the most important attraction. Consequently, nature will be reflected in the architectural style, as well as in the activities (Scandinavian Architects, 2014).

That nature is important for tourism in Ylläs, has been confirmed by the research of Jokinen and Tyrväinen (2013) and Cornelisse (2018). According to Ylläs Travel Association, “Ylläs is an authentic nature destination, it is the nature which pulls tourists to this destination” (interview, 2014). At the same time, the organization emphasizes its desire to grow as a destination, but it also wants to continue to focus on the preservation of nature. This is also what Kulujärvi (2017) concluded regarding the existing pathways in Ylläs, the growth-focused vs alternative-focused pathway. Although the market of international visitors is smaller than the national market of visitors, they expect that there is more growth potential on the international one (interview, January 2014). When asked what sustainability means for Ylläs, the Association responds that Ylläs must protect nature, since this is the main reason why tourists come to Ylläs. Although the Association sees the competing tourist attraction Levi, some 50 kilometers away, as a “party” destination and Ylläs has the image as a natural destination, the Association still would like to grow like Levi. However, without that party element (interview, 2014). This wish regarding growth and maintaining business in the long term refers to McCool and Moisey’s (2009) interpretation of “sustaining tourism,” in which sustainability is used for the preservation of tourism business. Protecting the authenticity of Ylläs, its nature, is in the interest of tourism business.

This view is in line with Visit Ylläs. In 2016, the joint marketing of Ylläs was outsourced to that organization, a separate marketing company, in which approximately 50 of the local enterprises are stakeholder, including Kolari municipality (Kulujärvi, 2017). This is another construction compared to the resort organization that represented 150 enterprises, large as well as small. During the interview in January 2014, the representative of the resort organization already explained that the bigger companies wanted to have their own marketing which included the ski resort, due to the divergent views regarding the development of tourism in Ylläs. Today, Visit Ylläs is the marketing organization of the tourist destination Ylläs, “the guard of the Ylläs brand” (Ylipiessa, 2018, p. 9). This brand stands for: “Easy and safe access to true wilderness” (Ylipiessa, 2018, p. 4). The resort organization, on the other hand, is currently responsible for the development and maintenance of the trails and the improvement of the inner traffic in the Ylläs area (Ylipiessa, 2018).

Tourist organizations

On the question how tourists experience tourism in Ylläs according to the entrepreneurs, the entrepreneurs indicate that international tourists, in contrast to the Finnish, do not come to Ylläs

for cross-country skiing or Alpine skiing. “International tourists come for the unique, special elements of nature in the North” (interview owner travel agency Ylläsjärvi, 2012). The fact that Ylläs is experienced as a nature destination has to do with the Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park which is part of the tourist destination according to them. It is the most popular national park in Finland; it is visited almost 500,000 times a year and it has contributed €30m to the local economy so far (interview owner travel agency Ylläsjärvi, 2012) and offers “the cleanest air in the world” (Ylipiessa, 2018, p. 3).

A travel agency in Ylläsjärvi (interview, 2012) also confirms that tourists visit Ylläs due to its unique environmental characteristics, and “that tourism business is extremely important for the communities of Ylläs.” The company, however, would like to see tourism in the region being more committed to the preservations of nature. The entrepreneurs in Ylläs do indeed think of the environment, according to the respondent:

But in practice, they do not always act to this. It is not easy to act green in this area. Snowmobiles and quads e.g. are inevitable. No one is still skiing when it comes to the transportation of people and products. (owner travel agency Ylläsjärvi, 2014)

The agency in Ylläsjärvi offers green activities. The company refuses to organize quad tours in summer, for example. However, if the customer wants to do a quad and he takes his own quads, then the agency must, from a commercial point of view, take part in this. The same was the case with the use of snowmobiles in the past: at first there were no facilities in Ylläs, until the tourists started to drive everywhere. The environment was damaged and the inhabitants were bothered by the noise. From that moment the paths were created. Ylläs had to explain the owner of the travel agency in Ylläsjärvi.

Despite the green image of her company, she continues, the agency has 30 snowmobiles on its doorstep. The reason is that competitors offer these tours:

Tourists want to drive snowmobiles. The snowmobiles on the other hand also cause conflict between the cross-country skiers and the snowmobile users: The cross-country skiers swing their poles to chase the snowmobiles, with their noise and smell.

The agency thinks that Ylläs has to evolve, has to adjust itself to the demand of the tourism market in order to be able to continue to work and live in Ylläs. This is in line with the interpretation “sustaining tourism,” in which sustainability is used for the preservation of the tourism business in Ylläs in the long term.

An employee of Destination Lapland (interview, 2012) interprets sustainability also as McCool and Moisey’s (2009) “sustaining tourism,” a process in which business is developed and the amount of visitors can increase, in such a way that in 100 years, tourism still exists. In this region everything is driven by profit, especially within the larger companies, he explains.

Manager at Destination Lapland (interview, 2012) notes that sustainability is becoming increasingly important on the international travel market, also when it comes to the willingness of other companies to work with you. He was recently approached by a Spanish travel organization. When they noticed that Destination Lapland could not offer a “sustainable” product, the organization decided not to cooperate with Destination Lapland. The manager explains:

Swiss tourists have already complained that they cannot separate their waste. This cannot be achieved by Destination Lapland, because the local government should collect the waste. The entrepreneurs in Ylläs talk about sustainability, because tourists are talking about it. However, the government is not interested in sustainability.

In contrast to the others, an employee of a hotel in Ylläsjärvi (interview, 2012) states that sustainability has always been part of tourism in Ylläs. Residents of and entrepreneurs in Ylläsjärvi, such as her grandfather, have always respected nature. How Finns view nature is different, however, from how Anglo-Saxons view nature. Literature explains: “The Finnish concept of wilderness is somehow different from the Anglo-American one; human subsistence use is an essential part of the Finnish wilderness, part of the wilderness character of the areas” (Ahokumpu, 2013, p. 9). This means that Finns view wilderness as a source of life. For that reason, nature should not be left alone. It is part of the daily life of people in Lapland

(Ahokumpu, 2013). This is also confirmed by a tour guide at Snow Fun Safaris: “Nature is interwoven in Lappish culture” (interview, 2014).

The in-depth interviews with the entrepreneurs in Ylläs ($n = 21$) indeed show that the opinions regarding sustainability are divided, which was also concluded by Kulujärvi (2017): economic- vs ecological-focused pathways. Besides the existence of these pathways, one thinks that Ylläs acts very consciously when it comes to sustainability, another feels that the destination should do more. In order to obtain a quantitative insight into the sustainability aspect in Ylläs, a survey was conducted among the employees in the tourism industry ($n = 68$). This illustrates that employees of tourist organizations do not know whether their organization has a sustainability certificate or not: more than 45 percent does not know. Nearly 27 percent indicates that the company does not have a sustainability certificate. Simultaneously, interviews show that local entrepreneurs (interviews, 2012 and 2014) are aware of the changing attitudes of international travel markets regarding sustainability, such as the example of Destination Lapland (Table III).

The survey among the employees in tourism in Ylläs ($n = 68$) also demonstrated that Ylläs interprets sustainability as a way to maintain tourism business in the long term. More than 70 percent (strongly) agrees to this interpretation, against almost 50 percent who interprets sustainable tourism as small-scale tourism or more than 50 percent who associates sustainability in tourism as a tool for further social and economic development. The interpretations regarding “sustaining business” and “what should tourism sustain” were confirmed during the interviews: several employees in tourism are still hoping for the construction of more tourism related buildings, which was also concluded by Kulujärvi (2017). Regarding the interpretation of small-scale tourism development, the inhabitants of Ylläs already stated that they wanted to stop the growth of tourism development in their region, due to an increased awareness regarding negative impacts of tourism on the environment (Tuulentie and Mettiäinen, 2007). At the same time, in 1993 the inhabitants of Ylläs already were of the opinion that the number of tourists in Ylläs should remain as it was then. The support for a status quo was not new to the researchers in 2007. As a result, “regarding the flexibility of the residents the ultimate limit to growth from socio-cultural point of view is difficult to set” (Tuulentie and Mettiäinen, 2007, p. 219). Despite the existence of the alternative pathway in Ylläs, Kulujärvi (2017) writes about, also these tourism actors do want tourism in Ylläs to grow: these tourism actors deviate from the growth-focused path by preferring an alternative one. However, they also want tourism to increase, but they have a “less growth-focused view” (Kulujärvi, 2017, p. 50) compared to others. Growth should be in balance with the environment, since it is this environment why tourists visit their region (Table IV). This is also validated by the survey (Table V): employees in tourism believe that tourists experience memorable tourist experiences, especially the international tourists. This is due to the Arctic, unique nature that international tourists can experience in Ylläs (interviews travel agency Ylläsjärvi, 2012; manager Destination Lapland, 2012).

Table III Results questions regarding sustainability certificate

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Certificate Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
<i>Valid</i>				
yes, international certificate	5	7.4	7.7	7.7
yes, national certificate	8	11.8	12.3	20.0
yes, both international and national	3	4.4	4.6	24.6
no	18	26.5	27.7	52.3
do not know	31	45.6	47.7	100.0
Total	65	95.6	100.0	
<i>Missing</i>				
System	3	4.4		
Total	68	100.0		

Table IV Interpretations of sustainability among tourism employees in Ylläs

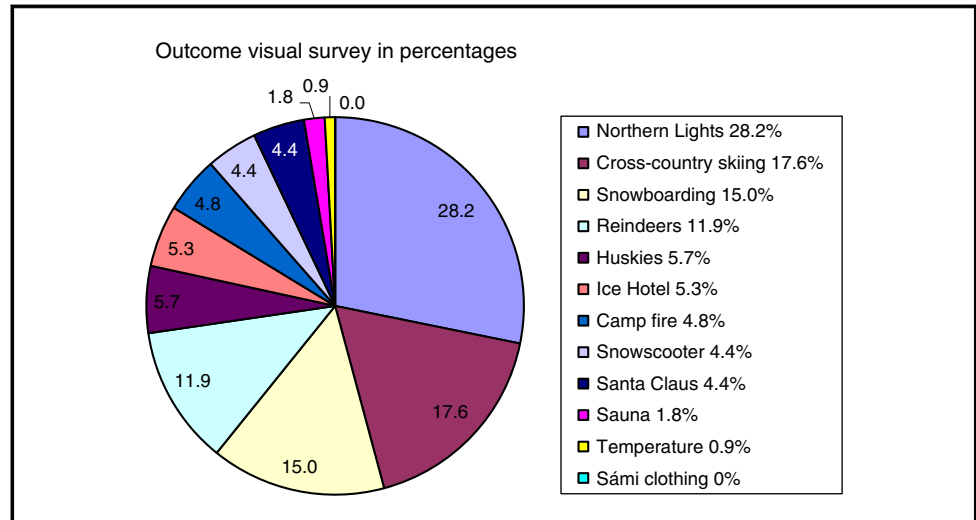
	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
<i>Long period of time</i>				
Valid				
strongly disagree	1	1.5	1.6	1.6
disagree	4	5.9	6.3	7.8
neutral	14	20.6	21.9	29.7
agree	36	52.9	56.3	85.9
strongly agree	9	13.2	14.1	100.0
Total	64	94.1	100.0	
Missing				
System	4	5.9		
Total	68	100.0		
<i>Small scale</i>				
Valid				
strongly disagree	1	1.5	1.6	1.6
disagree	2	2.9	3.2	4.8
neutral	28	41.2	44.4	49.2
agree	21	30.9	33.3	82.5
strongly agree	11	16.2	17.5	100.0
Total	63	92.6	100.0	
Missing				
System	5	7.4		
Total	68	100.0		
<i>Tool development</i>				
Valid				
disagree	4	5.9	6.3	6.3
neutral	26	38.2	41.3	47.6
agree	28	41.2	44.4	92.1
strongly agree	5	7.4	7.9	100.0
Total	63	92.6	100.0	
Missing				
System	5	7.4		
Total	68	100.0		

Table V Question regarding the memorability of the tourism product Ylläs according to tourism employees

	Frequency	Percent	Memorable Valid percent	Cumulative percent
<i>Valid</i>				
neutral	3	4.4	4.5	4.5
experienced this a little	15	22.1	22.7	27.3
experienced this	47	69.1	71.2	98.5
do not know	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
Total	66	97.1	100.0	
<i>Missing</i>				
System	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		

Inhabitants of Ylläs

A visual questionnaire regarding why tourists should visit Ylläs was conducted among the inhabitants ($n = 78$). In this questionnaire, inhabitants could pick three photos, which according to them represent the authenticity of Ylläs. Photos related to nature scored considerably higher than the photo relating to culture, which did not receive one vote (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Outcome visual survey

“Most inhabitants of Ylläs are content with tourism, because it creates employment. Without tourism, there would have been insufficient work” (interview employee Kylmämää Tours, 2012). The ski tracks alone, for example, create employment for 30 people throughout the year and 120 during high season (Taskinen, 2010). On the statement “Tourism in Ylläs stimulates the protection of the natural environment in Ylläs and surroundings,” more than 61 percent ($n = 114$) responded that tourism indeed stimulates the protection of the natural environment. This also applies to the statement “Tourism in Ylläs stimulates the conservation of the Lappish culture in Ylläs.” More than 60 percent believes that tourism contributes to the protection of the natural environment, and the conservation of their local culture (Table VI). When it comes to its contribution to the economic well-being of Ylläs, almost 97 percent thinks tourism is important to very important. In all,

Table VI Results questions regarding sustainability Ylläs among inhabitants

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
<i>Lappish culture</i>				
Valid				
strongly disagree	2	1.7	1.7	1.7
disagree	17	14.5	14.7	16.4
neutral	24	20.5	20.7	37.1
agree	57	48.7	49.1	86.2
strongly agree	16	13.7	13.8	100.0
Total	116	99.1	100.0	
Missing				
System	1	0.9		
Total	117	100.0		
<i>Protection nature</i>				
Valid				
strongly disagree	1	0.9	0.9	0.9
disagree	14	12.0	12.1	12.9
neutral	30	25.6	25.9	38.8
agree	56	47.9	48.3	87.1
strongly agree	15	12.8	12.9	100.0
Total	116	99.1	100.0	
Missing				
System	1	0.9		
Total	117	100.0		

86 percent of the respondents are employed in tourism. Not one respondent indicates that tourism is unimportant for the community. According to 94 percent, tourism is important to very important for the prosperity of friends and family, as well as for the respondents themselves (Table VII).

The inhabitants of Ylläs depend on tourism. More than 90 percent of the inhabitants work in tourism business (interviews, 2014). At the same time, the respondents indicate that tourism contributes to the protection and conservation of nature as well as their culture. This means that the inhabitants interpret sustainability as McCool and Moisey's (2009) "sustaining tourism" or "sustainable tourism," although, at the same time, the inhabitants indicate that tourism business in Ylläs may increase. None of the respondents ($n = 21$) is against a further development of tourism business in Ylläs (interviews, 2012 and 2014). This would mean that the inhabitants interpret sustainability in relation to "sustaining tourism": the maintenance of the tourism business in the long term. The third interpretation of McCool and Moisey (2009), namely, "what should tourism sustain," is an interpretation that, according to McCool and Moisey, is reserved for policy levels, due to the objective to increase the social and economic development of a region with the help of tourism business.

Conclusion

Although all tourism actors agree on sustainable tourism development, at least three interpretations of sustainability were present in the development of tourism in Ylläs. Some tourism actors, as well as the Kolari municipality, prefer the growth-focused path and with that economic-orientated sustainability, a focus which is described by, among others, Page and Connell (2009). Other tourism actors prefer an alternative path, a "less-growth path" which aims for growth that is more in balance with the natural environment. Consequently, this empirical study subscribes the divergent views Kulujärvi (2017) mentioned in the development of tourism in

Table VII Results questions regarding importance of tourism Ylläs among inhabitants

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
<i>Important for community</i>				
Valid				
Important	9	7.7	7.7	7.7
Very important	108	92.3	92.3	100.0
Total	117	100.0	100.0	
<i>Important for family and friends</i>				
Valid				
Totally not important	2	1.7	1.7	1.7
Not important	3	2.6	2.6	4.3
Neutral	4	3.4	3.4	7.7
Important	28	23.9	23.9	31.6
Very important	80	68.4	68.4	100.0
Total	117	100.0	100.0	
<i>Important for myself</i>				
Valid				
Not important	1	0.9	0.9	0.9
Neutral	3	2.6	2.6	3.4
Important	30	25.6	25.6	29.1
Very important	83	70.9	70.9	100.0
Total	117	100.0	100.0	
<i>Economic prosperity</i>				
Valid				
Strongly disagree	2	1.7	1.7	1.7
Neutral	2	1.7	1.7	3.4
Agree	13	11.1	11.1	14.5
Strongly agree	100	85.5	85.5	100.0
Total	117	100.0	100.0	

Ylläs. However, although she wonders whether a growth-oriented development of tourism can meet “sustainability,” this empirical study demonstrates that this growth-oriented development can indeed meet “sustainability.” After all, sustainability as a discursive concept can be interpreted in various ways, based on the various interests, agendas and values of the different tourism actors (Jamal *et al.*, 2013). This is also what this empirical study in Ylläs demonstrates.

Despite their divergent views regarding sustainable tourism though, most stakeholders in Ylläs aim for the preservation of the unique nature within the context of tourism development, since it is this authentic nature that guarantees the livelihoods of the inhabitants of Ylläs in the long term. As a result, the search for authenticity in contemporary tourism, the authenticity discourse that currently dominates tourism, can contribute to the sustainability of an ecological vulnerable and economic valuable tourist destination, e.g. Ylläs in Finnish Lapland. As long as that search for authenticity remains a significant motive for authenticity-seeking tourists to visit destinations in these kinds of regions, “authenticity” can function as some kind of bridge that can overcome the gap between the various views regarding sustainability in the development of tourism in peripheral regions. The question in that sense however is, what is “authenticity”? Despite all discussions in tourism studies about authenticity (Cohen and Cohen, 2012; Harrison, 2017) it is suggested to continue empirical research regarding authenticity, in order to be able to bridge the gap between the divergent interpretations of sustainability and to find that common aspect that connects the two current world views: economy and ecology. Sthapit (2013) and Cornelisse (2018), e.g. already researched some of the perceptions of tourists regarding authenticity in the context of Lapland. The only stakeholder that deviates here is the municipality of Kolari. The reason is that the municipality is responsible for all inhabitants, also the people who have their livelihood outside Ylläs. Although Saarinen (2004a) cautioned for the development of enclave-like resorts that differentiate from their surroundings, this is what happened in Kolari with the tourist destination Ylläs. It is important that also this tourism actor stays connected to the development of sustainable tourism in Ylläs, by not isolating tourist centers, e.g. Ylläs from the surrounding peripheries in the ecological vulnerable and economic valuable province of Lapland. After all, only in cooperation with all stakeholders, sustainability, despite the various interpretations, can be achieved.

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