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**Practices and funding opportunities of national parks in Northern
Finland: A future oriented approach on entry fees**

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University of Lapland, Faculty of Social Sciences. Title: Practices and funding opportunities in Finnish national parks in Finnish Lapland: A future oriented approach on entry fees. Author: Elias Rossinen. Degree programme: Northern Tourism. The type of the work: Master's Thesis. Supervisor: Professor, Outi Rantala. Number of pages: 75 + Appendices. Year: 2024 Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to find out would it be reasonable to use entry fees to enter a Finnish national park or is the current practice of free entry the most suitable option or some other practice like voluntary fees. Such issues like over-crowdedness and funding issues with the manager of the parks, Metsähallitus are something that it has be able to deal with at the moment or in the future, which is why a demand for such study was evident. Also, similar studies were not made in a Finnish context while recently discussions about the use of entry fees have become more and more relevant as the government of Finland has taken a policy for cutting all possible costs to balance the state budget. Globally, national parks are facing decreases in state funding year after year – thus a mandatory entry fee has become a common practice elsewhere in many countries to cover the costs of the national park consumption and management.

The main research question of the study was: What is expected to happen if Finnish national parks would start to charge entry fees for entering a national park? This question and related sub-questions were attempted to find answers to with a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews and summative content analysis as the research methods of this study. The study was carried out with a predictive future research approach while considering social constructivism as the underlying social paradigm of the study. The study was lying on practice theory as a theoretical background of the study. Also, previous research on national park funding globally and in Finnish context were studied to find a research gap. Eventually, eight experts from Finnish national park and forestry industry were interviewed to collect the research data of the study. After analyzing the research data, the results show that the current practice of free entry in Finnish national parks is the practice to be continued with. However, voluntary entry fee practice can be attempted if it is found lawful and justified. The practice of mandatory entry fee would not be able to work in Finnish national parks due to ideological reasons as the idea of paying for entering nature in Finland is a scenario that is against the basic values of Finnish mentality in terms of equality and nature. Nature is something that cannot be done in terms of profitable business in mind even when it would be justified in the times of financial challenges. Even though the mandatory fee would have some positive effects it is something that is not going to happen and should not happen. Similar research should be done in other Nordic countries to find out if the mentality of nationalities explains this strong sense of ideology and its power.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The national park system as we currently know it applies multiple strategies for funding these days (Ostergren, Solop & Hagen, 2005, p. 18). Globally, it is a common practice to collect entry fees to enter a national park for a visitor. Usually, the more developed countries do not collect these entry fees, whereas the less developed do, as it is a very important source of income for the national parks (Tisdell & Wilson, 2003; Lindberg, 2007, p. 231). Generally, protected areas worldwide gain roughly about eight billion visits annually, which provides a total amount of 600 billion US dollars in total per year. These entry fees are crucial to the finances of the protected areas, which national parks are also part of, and to their respective considered social value and accessibility (Van Zyl, Kinghorn & Emerton, 2019, p. 39). Tourism industry is currently attempting to adapt to the growing demands of tourists to have ecotourism destinations, which involve places like national parks etc. (Machado 2001, p. 153). Kallunki (2023) in a news report states that, according to Metsähallitus, adequate funding has not been received to manage the national parks of Finland. The annual funding of 44 million euros is not enough to cover the repair debt that keeps growing in the national parks of Finland, which means that the facilities inside the parks including equipment are in demand of repair due to erosion and use. However, these actions are not being able to take due to lack of funds. The government of Finland and Metsähallitus are planning to start collecting voluntary entry fees to cover the costs – however, this will not be a permanent solution, but a helpful aid, if it is to happen (Kallunki, 2023). Hence, the topic of the study is relevant and has been in recent discussions, which is why it is interesting to conduct such study, that is also needed.

The definitions of protected areas and/or national parks can differ globally, but in Finland a national park is defined as a nature conservation area that is larger than 1000 hectares according to Kittilä, Jokinen, Kauppinen and Maaninka (2011). It is also a landscape and a national view that is open for everyone. The national parks are established on the lands owned by the state and are maintained by Metsähallitus. The nature of the national parks includes traditional Finnish nature and forest and are considered as very precious. The first national parks to Finland were established in 1938 to Pallas-Ounastunturi and to Pyhäntunturi. Since then, many other national parks have been established; majority of them residing in Lapland and being free of charge ever since (Kittilä & et al., 2011, p. 5). Also, as user fee discussion and its meaning are being discussed, South Korean national park officials questioned the increase of the current entry fees, for instance, and found out that the

increase was justified for environmental, cultural, management and quality reasons. (Ki-Lee & Han, 2002).

The scarce finance resources of the protected areas are a never-ending challenge, which in the case of Bardecki and Wrobel (2001) in Nepal, for instance, led to the increase of the entry fees in the protected areas to fill this gap; in a more detailed manner however, favoring the domestic visitors. (Bardecki & Wrobel, 2001, p. 85-86). Globally, tourism has been growing and visitors tend to choose nature over traditional warm and sunny destinations with beaches and pools to experience nature, which has been growing in the recent years. US and Canada, for instance, have funded national parks through tax money (Brown, 2001; Walls & et al., 2009), but due to the decrease of it, other ways were started to discuss about. (Brown, 2001). The public funds for the protected areas in other countries has been decreasing as well. In Tanzania, for example, the funding was started to focus on the entry fees to gain finances for managing the protected areas, for instance (Spenceley, Rylance & Laiser, 2017).

Bal and Mohanty (2014) studied the willingness to pay of these entry fees by the visitors and stated that the financial valuation has a major role when measuring the damage from ecosystem degradation. Willingness to pay in their study in India found out that travel costs, income of the visitor, and the quality of the national park were the most significant factors. Social norms and social trust also have a major influence on the visitor's decision-making process (Bal & Mohanty, 2014, p. 66). Nowadays, however, should be understood how much damage the current tourism growth causes for the nature in the protected areas like national parks. Should the nature be preserved for conservation and tackling climate change or used for tourism to collect entry fees? This has been the question in India as the costs for conservation have been growing, and revenue for the entry fees decreasing (Santhakumar, 2009, p. 454 & 457). Is it ethically justified to collect fees for entering a national park, let alone allow people to enter naturally preserved areas. Do the fees limit visitors in a reasonable manner and should the fees be used for visitors to respect the nature and for the managing side to be able to maintain the services in an improved manner. The answers differ depending on the country, but in the US most visitors consider the fees reasonable and also the current prices of them (Ostergren & et al., 2003, p 4).

Protected areas have been created for conservation of nature with a focus on sustaining biodiversity and ecological processes. Protected areas, such as national parks are also important destinations for nature tourism. These protected areas are always dependent on funding in order to manage the area

and its conservation (Thapa & Getzner, 2014). A case study from Nepal from Lamsal, Atreya, Pant and Kumar (2016) displayed a common situation in a global scale where the government had the responsibility of the funding of protected areas in Nepal. Unfortunately, the state budget is a highly competitive source of income for many sectors, which raised questions for additional funding possibilities. However, natural areas were an exception, and it was considered, why only those areas were allowed to collect entry fees to manage the budget (Lamsal & et al., 2016, p.52).

In Thailand over 80 forest areas have been recreated as national parks, and the funding for the management for the parks comes from the government as well as from the additionally collected entry fees. Unfortunately, recreational activities from visitors and local villages inside the parks have caused encroachment, pollution, soil erosion and forest fires leading to partly deletion of the forests (Israngkura, 1998). In the best cases, tourism can improve the possibilities on achieving the goals in terms of conservation and development. For instance, employment, education and biodiversity conservation levels can be seen improved (Brown & et al., 2023). Samdin, Radam and Yacob (2010) studied tourist's willingness to pay these entry fees in a Malaysian national park and found out that visitors with a higher education background were more willing to pay these entry fees (Samdin & et al., 2010, p. 216). This willingness to pay is highly correlated to the satisfaction of the visitors, especially when contemplating whether it is worth it to revisit someday. Proper quality information about the park most often appreciated and can lead to being happy with the entry fees. (Taylor & Grandjean, 2009, p. 19). At the same time, these fees and state funds seem to not fill the gap in terms of adequate funding to meet the required budget which leads to bad management of the park. (Van Sickle & Eagles, 1998, p. 225). National parks have potential to grow their revenues as the entry fees have been on a low level mostly (Nelson, 2000). On the other hand, concerns over pricing entry fees too high would lead to decrease in number of visitors due to higher costs (Pascoe & et al., 2014, p. 147).

In this study, the phenomenon of national park funding practices will be considered in the context of Northern Finland, which is why the research data is collected in the context of Northern Finland in the regions of Lapland, Kainuu and Northern Ostrobothnia. The urge to choose Northern Finland is based on the fact that the protected areas of Northern Finland are the most popular and most visited, even among foreign tourists as well (Luontoon.fi, 2024).

1.2 Previous research on entry fees and national parks in Finland

Previously, research on national park use in nature tourism and in recreational activities have been studied moderately in Finland. Tyrväinen and Tuulentie (2007) studied nature tourism and nature's effects on mental health (Tyrväinen & Tuulentie, 2007). Puhakka (2007) studied the interaction between tourism and nature conservation in national parks in Finland (Puhakka, 2007). Äijälä (2022) has studied sled dogs use as actors in a touristic landscape in a national park in Finnish Lapland (Äijälä, 2022). Less studies in Finnish national parks related to entry fees and the attitudes around has been done recently. However, Sievänen and Ruuska (1999) studied attitudes on Finnish residents on priced recreational services. Also, Ovaskainen (2001) studied opinions funding of the state-owned recreational areas. Watson (2001) on the other hand issues on using the entry fees (Watson, 2001, p. 7; Ovaskainen, 2001, p.19. as cited in Järviluoma & Saarinen, 2001).

Protected areas and their meaning have grown significantly over the years as the number of national parks has grown. Especially the national parks are considered as almost iconic and most popular destinations for the nature travelers (Puustinen & et al., p. 161 as cited in Tyrväinen & et al., 2007). In Finland the non-cost concept of recreational areas including protected areas like national parks has been supported by the majority. However, some people like entrepreneurs, highly educated and people with higher income were more willing to pay possible entry fees compared to the opposite side (Sievänen & Ruuska, 1999). Growing interest of protected areas should lead to increase in the maintenance service of the nature conserved areas to maintain and manage the park that meets the demands of nature tourism, but also other activities, such as business practice, research and other ways of usage (Puhakka, 2007, p. 14). More research is needed still as economic growth of nature tourism and the leading outcomes of that demand resources in employment, for instance. The contradiction on attempting to synthesize tourism and nature conservation in the recreational areas, which happen to be protected areas most of the time, will lead to disturbances and misunderstanding without more research (Järviluoma & Saarinen, 2001, p. 5-6).

It is important to understand the attracting factors in the nature destinations and especially in the touristic landscape see e.g. (Rantala & Uusitalo, 2007, p. 31-44; Äijälä, 2022, p.18) in Finland if wanting to charge for the experience. Finland's most highlighted attractions in general have been nature, landscape, silence, peacefulness and the possibilities for transportation in a nature reserved area (Rantala & Uusitalo, 2007, p. 31 as cited in Tyrväinen & Tuulentie, 2007). Still, surprisingly less studies globally have been implemented on the post-effects on adding entry fees to recreational

areas. Effects on opinions on having the fees prior to the actual procedures has been done, but more research is still needed as the attitudes might change afterwards (Watson, 2001., p. 9 as cited in Järviluoma & et al., 2001).

Sustainable development as a goal has become more relevant than ever in society recently. Hence, similar discussion on tourism has increased globally as well in Finland also (Tuulentie & Saarinen, 2005, p.5). At the same time, it is often wondered, why people still want to visit Lapland when it is a destination that is relatively difficult to reach, expensive and cold as well. The nature of Lapland is the common answer for this and most often all the attractions and activities relate to nature of Lapland. Beautiful scenery, quietness, peace and the nature itself were mentioned in a study related to Pallas skiing center and national park (Järviluoma, 2001, p. 51 & 61). People have varying interests and reasons for traveling and for nature visits as Puhakka (2005) states that the "travel oriented" archetype of travelers are the kind of people that are familiar with protected areas, and they usually come for a daytrip only. They are also attracted by tourism services and -structures such as trails, accommodation, and guidance. This kind of traveler wishes to experience nature with ease without challenge and risk and consider national parks as a quality nature destination (Puhakka, 2005, p. 8. as cited in Tuulentie & Saarinen, 2005).

Tourism has had positive effects in the northern Lapland at least when, for instance, Saariselkä skiing center was established, as no permanent population was living at the location before the establishment according to Hallikainen & et al (2008). National parks of Lemmenjoki and Urho Kekkonen in the municipality of Inari are tourism wise very important areas. The business owners and stakeholders of Inari consider the nature and landscape being the most important factors of attraction for tourists to visit there. (Hallikainen & et al., 2008, p. 201). Rutanen and Luostarinen (2000) consider the term of nature entrepreneurship to be related with tourism as well and conclude that specific definition is not needed in tourism, because only general lines of inspection and consideration is necessary by looking at every business as an individual. Few of the examples for nature entrepreneurship include sustainable and responsible practices like focusing on silence and remoteness, mass tourism is not appreciated, and transportation without petrol-powered vehicles should be limited as much as possible (Rutanen & Luostarinen, 2000, p. 14). It should be understood why people want to visit protected areas like national parks and the nature in general. Landscape or the view is considered mainly to be the main attracting factor for such action to be taken by the traveler. The amusement of the landscape is not usually the main reason for the particular trip but, it is more of a necessity for a successful trip in general. In a study by

Silvennoinen, Tahvanainen and Tyrväinen (1998) common attracting factors for a trip to succeed were studied and it was found out that clean environment, hospitality and clean nature were the most important factors. Beautiful scenery, safety and delicious foods were the second most important factors (Silvennoinen & et al., 1998, as cited in Saarinen & Järviluoma, 1998, p. 112).

In a global context, willingness to pay has been studied more effectively compared to Finland, where the research is mostly based on why people travel to the destinations and why nature tourism is booming in Lapland for instance. In a study by Witt (2019) in Mexico, the results implicate what similar research often concludes: protected sites throughout the world have funding issues, which is why revenue from visitor fees should be gained more to provide effective management, conservation, labor and infrastructure (Witt, 2019, p.18).

1.3 Research gap and aim of the study

Research on national parks and protected areas in Finland are mostly related to visitor surveys to understand, what types of visitors visit a particular area or park (e.g. Jylänki, 2019). There is little to no research on entry fees in Finnish national parks or visitor surveys to know what the opinions on those are. From globally done research, it is widely known that educated people with higher incomes are more likely to want to pay higher entry fees or fees in general. The opposite side supports free access on the other hand (e.g. Witt, 2019; Ostergren & et al., 2003; Samdin & et al., 2010). In a Metla report by Järviluoma and Saarinen (2001) Ovaskainen (2001) studied Finnish visitors' opinions on different funding methods on state governed recreational areas and concluded, for instance, that over 2 million visits to state owned recreation areas managed by Metsähallitus were made (national parks, protected areas), but the state budget is simply too low to manage the areas properly (Ovaskainen, 2001, p. 19. as cited in Järviluoma & et al., 2001). Also, Watson (2001) in his article concludes that globally entry fees are considered as a valid resource for funding of the recreational areas. In the US, in some areas a 5-year projects were implemented to assess the effects of adding entry fees. A major contradiction was found out during these experiments: some organizations and persons had a very negative opinion on these fees, but still the agencies and officials that are part of the experiment consider the idea as very useful in their annual reports. (Watson, 2001, p. 17. as cited in Järviluoma & et al., 2001).

Important research also on tourists' views on tourism itself in a national park was done by Puhakka (2005, 2007) to understand what motives tourists have when visiting nature in Finland. She divided

in her study the visitors to four different groups: 1. Careless, who don't care or neither know much about national parks, nor consider national parks more as a tourism destination rather than nature destination. 2. The tourism oriented who were already mentioned as persons who are familiar with the national parks and are easily attracted by various recreations. 3. Nature oriented simply visit because of the nature and aspects related to that. 4. Traditional type, who are in the middle compared to nature and tourism oriented. They are attracted by the landscape and have visited before but less than the previously mentioned, and support the recreation use and not being against it (Puhakka, 2005., p. 9-11; Puhakka, 2007., p 134). Hence, as these types of studies have been implemented in Finland, where motivations and attractions to travel and the travel types have been studied, more research on funding and entry fees is needed clearly, as the funding has been seen as an issue for decades (Järviluoma & et al., 2001).

Research gap is thus detected in terms of studies lacking context in Finnish national parks. Also, Northern Finland was chosen for the area of study due to its recent growth in popularity and number of visitors making them more interesting and important area of study (Luontoon.fi, 2024).

The main research question of the study is: What is expected to happen if Finnish national parks would start to charge entry fees for entering a national park? Sub-questions are: 1. What are the positive and negative effects of the current practice of free entry? 2. What kind of effects such change would cause in funding, visitors, and in the nature and management of the parks? 3. How much specific user fees in national parks contribute to the current funding issues at hand?

The phenomenon at hand, national park entry fees, will be studied with a future-oriented research method because of this, as it is attempted to understand the possible outcomes of actions that are not concrete as for now. Summative content analysis will be used as an analysis method for this study to understand what kind of concepts and themes are discussed most in the research data. Future oriented approach in this study means the fact that hypothetical outcomes are attempted to gain information and understanding from. Thus, with this study it is not possible to factually predict what will happen, but to try to predict possibilities as well as possible – then displaying the most probable outcomes of the future within this context. The reliability of the study is based on experts who have currently the best possible understanding and expertise on national park management and their current situation. Hence, their opinions and view on this phenomenon are studied. These experts from northern Finland are therefore interviewed in this study and their words are analyzed with means of content analysis and then making the predictions. The interviewed persons are

experts from research and management organizations that are focusing on forest- and natural services of Finnish forests and other Finnish research organizations that make research on the natural phenomena of Finland. The employees of Metsähallitus will be interviewed for this study with semi-structured interviews. The methodology will be explained in the forthcoming chapters. The purpose of the study is to gain understanding on the current practice of managing the national parks in Finland and to figure out if it would be reasonable and justified to start charging fees from visitors to enter a national park/protected area in Finland.

1.4 Structure of the study

The structure of this study will be followed through as follows: The second chapter is about the introduction of the empirical phenomenon of the study, which is the national park funding and entry fees and the previous research related to this phenomenon. The previous research is related to studies on protected area funding and national park funding with small implications on nature-based tourism and protected area management. Then, I will discuss the key theoretical background concept of the study, practices (practice theory). In the third chapter, the methodology of the study is presented and justified. In short, the study uses a qualitative approach. The study is carried out with a predictive future-oriented approach, eventually using summative content analysis as an analysis method of this study. Social constructivism is the underlying paradigm guiding the study. The research methods are semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection and content analysis as the analysis method.

2. Funding and use of the protected areas as an empirical phenomenon

2.1 Background of funding and entry fees on protected areas

Protected areas have been studied in the context of climate change for many decades (Lee, 2008). Most parts of the earth have been affected by human activities, which has led to destruction of the nature for an extensive period of time (Gaston & et al., 2008; Lee, 2008). The protected areas the basis for strategies of the conservation of biodiversity globally, but also regionally and locally (Gaston & et al., 2008, p. 93). Protected areas can be considered as various ways and set of different definitions, but Watson, Dudley, Segan and Hockings (2014) state that the idea of a modern protected area started in the 19th century in all continents in a way they were areas set up for protecting extraordinary wildlife and natural phenomena, primarily with a little to no economic related reasons (Watson & et al., 2014, p. 69). National parks are also considered as protected areas, and Puustinen, Pouta, Neuvonen and Sievänen also share the fact that the significance of protected areas has been growing for tourism while the number of these areas is rising simultaneously as a consequence. It is important to notice, that the economic impacts, in a regional scale, of the national parks are happening as a consequence related to the number of visitors and amount of funding raised for recreation activities and tourism services (Puustinen & et al., 2007, p. 161, as cited in Tyrväinen & Tuulentie, 2007).

However, when considering the necessities that allow tourism to happen and grow globally, in terms of nature elements, it is evident that the natural circumstances and nature natural resources and their accessibility have a major role in every aspect of tourism (Veijola, 2023, p. 60). But like said before and as Walls (2022) says in the US state funding has not been enough and has continued to drop significantly. Even though the infrastructure has been aging for too long, as buildings all the way from 1930s are still in use. The issue has been brought up several times, but actions are not being taken. Usually, there are two options that are considered valid, which are said many times: revenue from dedicated taxes or other sources not in the category of general funds like user fees (entry fees) (Walls, 2022, p. 586-587; Ansson, 1998, p. 9).

It is in common interest to improve the recreational areas to have possibilities for outside activities, as the health benefits are mutually agreed and understood. As long as the recreations and activities are done in a framework of responsibility and conservation of biodiversity, it will be considered acceptable. Otherwise, negative effects will occur, such as dying of plants, erosion of the ground,

lack of water quality in the lakes and disturbances for the animals (Neuvonen & et al., 2022, p. 8; Tyrväinen & et al., 2007, p. 5.; Veijola, 2023, p. 63).

Bednar-Friedl, Geberoitsher and Getzner (2009) also agree that the main issues in national parks relate to funding and nature conservation, but especially for endangered species and ecosystems. Their study was situated in Austria to study willingness to pay for conversation policies. This would be important as they also share the issue of lack of public funds and the political drive for this agenda (Bednar-Friedl & et al., 2009; Samdin & et al., 2010). Inadequate funding is a major challenge, because it leads to poor management, which means basic activities like maintaining equipment, facilities, building, staff and transportation possibilities and vehicles, for instance (Nchor & Ogogo, 2017, p. 41; Van Sickle & Eagles, 1998). According to James (1998) funding possibilities for protected areas like national parks include practices like: “conventional activities, emerging opportunities and future prospects”. However, ecotourism – or better-known definition, national park visitation for instance, is the most promising conventional source of funding, and shows increasing growth opportunity (James, 1999, p. 20; Ostergren & et al., 2003; Järviluoma & et al., 2001).

Walls (2014) in her another study presented another source of funding: public-private partnerships. These partnerships act completely without state funding or with only a small amount of it. This is a common practice in cities and urban areas (Walls, 2014, p. 5). She criticizes the donation-model where funding is based on private donations as the uncertainty of income flow and lack of donations due to considering it as “not necessary” by the potential visitors. However, she mentions a working practice of the cooperation between conservancies and non-profit organizations. In major us cities and in their central parks, the parks have become better managed in terms of nature as well when this bonding has been established. This is because they have more freedom and creativity, which leads to success eventually in this field (Walls, 2014, p. 2). This kind of cooperation is heavily needed as, for example, in the US, the protected areas have been funded by a specific land and water conservation fund (LWCF) which has been the primary option of funding since 1965. The funding from this source has been decreasing year after year, and similar events are happening throughout the world (Walls, 2009; Lamsal & et al., 2016; Van Sickle & Eagles, 1998). Another option from Fretwell and Podolsky (2002) encourages the managers of protected areas to cover all costs with user fees, because of its results in improved environmental sustainability and fiscal responsibility. If 80% of the user fees income is used for improving and management of the park, the management of the park is therefore accountable directly for the quality of the results and

management. Fiscal autonomy solves the barriers with the political appropriations as well (Fretwell & Podolsky, 2002).

Machado (2001) adds to the discussion that even though tourism and especially ecotourism in this case, are not able to gain the benefits that tourism brings to the national parks for instance. It is common to have inconveniences and insufficiencies in the information centres and infrastructure, and even in the guides that operate in the area. This causes the least optimal way of use of the revenue from the ecotourism (Machado, 2001, p. 153; Thapa & et al., 2014; Van Zyl & et al., 2019). In fact, most states globally are charging less from the user fees than what the visitors and tour organizers are willing to pay for (Machado, 2001, p.153-154; Taylor & Grandjean, 2009; Samdin & et al., 2010). Throughout history, recreation services and public parks have been funded with public (general) funds as well as appropriations with less emphasis on non-tax sources of income (Mowen & et al., 2006, p. 72).

It should be remembered that in Europe and in other industrialized areas of the world, protected areas are always with less exception's conservation areas. However, often these areas are surrounded by infrastructure for industries, cities and transportation infrastructure. Hence, the biodiversity is not noted as well as it should be (Clarke, 2015, p. 173). Sufficient funding is the number one concern for park and recreations service managers. Studies constantly end up to the same results of identifying adequate finances as a barrier for continuous growth and responsibility (Mowen & et al., 2006, p. 73-74).

Whilst attempting to maintain the sufficient funds, studies have mentioned that the recreation service managers might be risking losing long-term general funding when attempting to maximize short term revenue (Mowen & et al., 2006, p.73). The park- and recreation service system is different in the US compared to the European system on some levels. In the US, central parks can be located in the city urban areas. However, inequality is being an issue in a way that people of colour are not having equal rights in terms of access to these parks in Los Angeles, USA, for instance (Wolch & et al., 2005, p. 4-5). Isaacs (2018) mentions a sustainable development fund, which is being used to provide national park funding for sustainability programmes managed by the communities. Similar use of funds can be beneficial for the locals only, and also according to the study, tourism and taking part are still the declining reasons for development in rural areas and are still continuing to damage the power of sustainable development funding for the communities that are looking to achieve responsibility goals (Isaacs, 2018).

2.2 User fees

There are many reasons why user fees are considered as a better option to tax-funding according to Summers (2005): 1. Fairness, 2. Flexibility, 3. Freedom of choice for visitors on if state services are demanded or worth the price. 4. Fiscal incentives for management. 5. Eliminating the free-ride issue. Fairness is the most impactful argument, because then the ones who never use these services don't have contribute for nothing (Summers 2005, p.2). Even though protected areas are not advertised or marketed, they contribute to sustainable development. This is the case in developing countries by utilizing tourism. Scientists have claimed that with the optional income hypothesis, there are connections among ecotourism, local stakeholders and conservation (Aseres & Sira, 2020). Ecotourism is the necessary aspect that bonds the conservation and local communities together with the basis on that conservation and locals should be connected with mutual goals (Aseres & Sira, 2020).

In another study from Africa by Bruner & et al (2015), it was found out that an entry fee increase was justified if it was proved that the income received was used to conservation. Several studies implicate that also price increases due to increased costs for the managers are considered understandable and comprehended in comparison to higher demand or abusing the markets power. Park managers should be able to justify and explain why management costs require more money, especially if during times of inflation (Bruner & et al., 2015).

Alpizar, Carlsson and Johansson-Stenman (2008) studied voluntary contributions for national park funding by looking at the unselfishness of the participants on a natural field experiment. They were attempting to look at this phenomenon from the perspective of anonymity, reciprocity and conformity. By giving a small gift back for the contribution, they were able to gather small but good amount of donations. However, it would not be considered profitable at the end of the day (Alpizar & et al., 2008).

With these sorts of procedures can be proceeded as well. Related to this, Tervo-Kankare (2023, as cited in Veijola 2023) emphasizes global environmental change, which means the development paths that relate to the space of environment, which shape the world in a way or another that is being affected by us humans. This environmental change and co2 emissions and global warming are making damage for the nature, which is why it should be protected by investing on it. C02 has been growing in the atmosphere and that is causing for the earth to warm faster and faster. I f this issue

cannot be tackled the average temperature for the earth can have been risen at the end of the century at least 2 to 6 Celsius (Tervo-Kankare, 2023 as cited in Veijola, 2023).

The number of visitors in protected areas has been decreasing in industrialized countries, whilst foreign tourists have been growing in the countries considered as poor. It has become a common discussion lately about the benefits of ecotourism to the protected areas and to the locals.

Ecotourism, in some cases, has been studied to enhance local livelihood, management of the park and conservation of the park. However, studies have also found negative impacts caused by tourism activities for the biological resources in these protected areas (Karanth & DeFries, 2010). Lindberg (2001) displays the different sorts of fees that can be utilized in the protected area management: 1. entrance fees to the area. 2. admission fees to enter a building showcasing an exhibition, for instance. 3. Rental fees for equipment use like bikes etc. and user fees for facility usage like campsites. 4. Sales revenue from the retail stores operating in the area, and rental income from concessionaires. 5. Licenses and permits (usually for fishing and rafting). 6. Special service fees. Entrance fees are considered as the most widespread and controversial source of funds as the other fees can be considered as more tangible (Lindberg & Halpenny, 2001, p.5). The volumes of the visits into the protected areas have been studied in the US and Canada by (Eagles, Mclean and Stabler (2000) as the visitation to these areas is nationally considered as an important part of the outdoor industry, especially in the North America. They emphasize the social, economic and environmental effects of the visits and how the number of visits is highly related to that. Hence, it is highlighted that the visitor data is considered highly important to gather as it includes valuable data for improvement and recognition of issues (Eagles & et al., 2000, p. 63).

2.3 Protected areas

Most of the protected areas national parks do not collect entry fees, but still a big number of parks are doing this – and the numbers are growing. Lindberg (2007) talks about the fee levels, which are usually influenced in a decreased manner by legal and/or political discussions. Research is an important tool to know how various fee levels effect revenue and visitor volume. Research can also offer guidelines on how visitor reactions differ in different fee systems (Lindberg, 2007, p. 231). According to Rivera-Planter & Munoz-Pina (2008) every tourist has a specific maximum level of willingness to pay for a visit to a protected area, which is an undisclosed value that they compare to the eventual prices they encounter prior to the decision to do the trip. This willingness is not correlating to the level of income of the people as opinions vary as much as there are people

(Rivera-Planter & Munoz-Pina, 2008, p. 197). Thapa and Parent (2020) studied willingness to pay entry fees that were proven to use for park improvement and found out that visitors were most willing to pay for an entry fee to a national park if the revenue would be used for natural resources and amenities (Thapa & Parent, 2020, p. 268).

Protected area is defined as an area of land and/or sea that is specifically committed for protecting and maintaining biodiversity to the best of its ability. Same commitment applies at the same time for natural and associated cultural resources which is managed through legislated and other influential ways in these areas. Protected areas form the foundation of conservation throughout the world. The past 40 years have increased the number of protected areas to be listed by the UN to be over 100, 000 already (Emerton & et al., 2006, p.5).

Tourism and recreation allow mentionable benefits for protected areas and to their respective stakeholders and local people according to Bushell & et al (2006). The benefits include social and economic benefits allowing larger appreciation for cultural and natural heritage. Better quality of experience for park visitors grows the general interest in the protection and conservation of protected area values. If poorly managed, the visitation can lead to destruction of cultural biodiversity as well as ecosystem resources; it can also negatively impact local communities (Bushell & et al., 2006, p.6). Carter, Adams and Hutton provide insight on private protected areas, which are less known. They state that little is known about their extent, scale and objective of private protected areas. Defining them is a challenge because private sector usually has put tenure arrangements, various management systems and levels of control to them (Carter & et al., 2008).

Protected areas are one of the solutions to the conservation of biodiversity worldwide and for ecosystem services. The success of the conservation is dependent of funding that is considered as enough and adequate. One potential idea for fundraising was found out by Roberts Jones, Seidl, Audrey Ek and Smith (2016) which was to “sell” a broader set of ecosystem services that would have been made by the protected areas. Carbon sequestration was displayed as one of the instances for this (Roberts & et al., 2017). Tourists are indeed willing to pay more fees to support conservation of protected areas (Roberts & et al., 2017; Lindberg, 2007; Rivera-Planter & et al., 2008). However, as conservation support is often welcome, paying for additional ecosystem services from the protected areas does not always extend to global and intangible benefits like carbon sequestration (Roberts & et al., 2017).

Tourism in protected areas have a crucial role when it comes to contributing to financial sustainability of protected areas, but with effective sharing of the benefits can lead to positive effects on several stakeholders as well (Snyman & Bricker, 2021). Protected areas are one of the most important ways of protecting biodiversity, ecosystem services and supporting human well-being. They are a crucial piece of the sustainable development strategies, supporting the achievement of sustainable development goals in general (Snyman & Bricker, 2021, p. 705). In Australia, user fees for recreation services and other publicly used areas are well managed and commonly known, but contentious according to Buckley & et al (2003). The importance and acceptance of user charges depend on the social, legal, political and economic context and on the characteristics of the fees, including the size and type of them; how they are collected and how the money is spent on (Buckley & et al., 2003, p. 52). Bushell and Bricker (2017) also reveal in their study how the International Union for the Conservation of Nature has presented the green list for protected areas. The list is a certificate system which has led to recognition for the demand of global standards of the protected area management. As commonly stated, tourism is integral in protected areas, dependent on visitors and of tourism for necessary revenue. Partnerships among conservation and tourism are showing their effect on changes and attitudes towards the issues of biodiversity conservation and eco-friendly business (Bushell & Bricker, 2017, p. 106).

Covid-19 also had its impact on tourisms and protected areas as Spenceley & et al, (2021) state. Covid-19 led to tourism volume decreasing drastically with millions of jobs being lost. Whilst conservation was achieved in some level, the finances dropped to an alarming level (Spenceley & et al., 2021, p. 103). The worries on earths limits and the risks that it involves for the humans worldwide has been growing. The ability to conserve protected areas is nowadays considered as critical in order for humankind to be able to survive and progress. Societies will start to be deleted when the nature resource scarcity is put to a side for society made for capitalism (Job & et al., 2020, p. 1697). Spiteri and Nepal (2008) also agree that protected areas are critical factor globally to conserve biodiversity. Recent decades have proven for the managers of the protected areas that conservation goals are impossible to reach without recognizing the demands and worries of the locals that it concerns. Hence, incentive-based programs (IBPs) became a popular practice for protected area management; allowing local people to benefit with the conservation goals (Spiteri & Nepal, 2008, p. 391). In coastal areas, marine protected areas have been established globally as well. With marine protected areas (MPA) it is considered as an area in marine regions, either coastal or offshore where protection of nature is practiced lawfully or not (White & et al., 2002, p. 4).

Another instance from Australia by Herath (2000) displays issues on entry fees as a system for funding nature conservation areas in Australia. Entry fee system is common in Australia and is in use in most of the protected areas out there. The system, however, is considered as controversial. Fees are being charged for entry, camping, facility use and for other services. The side against the fees claim that nature conservation is a mandatory community service, and the areas should be allowed for every socioeconomic group, therefore (Herath, 2000, p. 35). However, there is still a demand for tools that limit the volume of tourists visiting protected areas as Lopez-del-Pino and Grisolia (2018) claim. Indeed, economic tools like user and/or entry fees can have positive effects on the improvement of climate sustainability as it likely decreases the tourist volume. The fees can be used for funding the management costs as well, but also as a tool for reducing congestion (Lopez-del-Pino & Grisolia 2018, p. 449-450; Fretwell & et al., 2002; Nchor & et al., 2017, p. 41; Van Sickle & et al., 1998).

Volunteer tourism is also considered as another major tool for protected area improvement. Weawer (2015) shows an example of this: Growing understanding of the demand and potential for a wider spectrum of protected area visitors to involve in practices that improve the ecological integrity of the areas they visit whilst increasing their own quality of life has increased. Non-professional volunteers are needed for basic everyday tasks in the areas like implementing wildlife surveys, growing public awareness of climate issues and advertising on participating in activities like this (Weawer, 2015, p. 683).

As protected areas are the foundation for global nature conservation and communities, the focus has been too much on the biological conservation rather than involving opinions of the locals (Sirivongs & Tsuchiya, 2012, p. 93). Yet consistency is lacking when it comes to notifying locals needs in this particular context. Hence, public support is crucial in order to maintain ecosystems and biodiversity with a success (Sirivongs & Tsuchiya, 2012, p. 93; Job & et al., 2020). Sekhar (2003) states, however, that local people's effort in supporting protected area management is evident in terms of biodiversity conservation. This is in relation to the direct benefits that locals acquire from the protected areas. The benefits usually include things such as biomass resources and park funds, for instance. Sustainable development is something that would majorly improve if the locals would contribute more (Sekhar, 2003, p. 341). Bajracharya, Furley and Newton (2006) contribute to similar discussion by claiming that such practices are becoming more usual, but such community-based conservation practices need proper definitions. Many protected areas are the main actors for biodiversity conservation – and has led to for them becoming the key elements of development

initiatives. However, establishment of protected areas can still result in numerous adverse consequences for the locals, especially in rural communities (Bajracharya & et al., 2006, p. 2766).

The reason why protected areas were established is mostly related to the fact that in order for nature to be able to be conserved, state laws are necessary for such practice to be initiated according to Hayes and Ostrom (2005). Larger areas are wanted to be protected so that habitats can be connected at a bigger spatial scale, which is a research-based motivation. This is usually given as a basis for the establishment of the protected areas (Hayes & Ostrom, 2005, p. 596). Protected area managers are under constant pressure for being able to provide significant and useful experiences for visitors, but also revenue for managing the conservation. Whilst not letting tourism to expose the integrity of the nature and conservation values of the protected areas. This is extremely difficult for obvious reasons and is recognized by many scholars (Leung & et al., 2018).

However, ecotourism, according to Hearne and Santos (2005) is recognised as a low harm measure for providing enough to make ends meet for nature conservation area, while allowing opportunities to not be displaced and for locals to not get exploited. Hence, ecotourism allows necessary income to be gained by the protected area for the benefit of natural ecosystems. Entry fees and tourism expenditures provide financial incentives for national park managers and communities in order to maintain safe, accessible and meaningful visits (Hearne & Santos, 2005, p. 304).

2.4 Correlation with nature-based tourism

Nature-based tourism or ecotourism is one of the largest growing industries in the world, dependent on the capabilities of the natural environment, especially in the protected areas like national parks. Eagles (2002) presents two vital components that the protected areas are dependent on: 1. sufficient quality of environment. 2. appropriate levels of services for consumers. The economic urgency that nature-based tourism has for tourism-industry led countries has led to more thoughtful policies and institutional development (Eagles, 2002, p. 132). Seasonality can be an issue as well, as Platania, Sharpley, Rizzo and Ruggieri (2022) claim in their study. In their case, volcano park in Italy is suffering from differences in tourist volume, which means over and under tourism depending on the season. This is a matter of sustainability, but also the fees are a critical part of funding the conservation and management. In this case, it is hard to estimate what is a sufficient price for entering; usually therefore the prices tend to differ depending on the season (Platania & et al., 2022).

Contingent valuation method is often used to gain information on how much visitors would be willing to pay for a particular change in the availability of the services available, usually with a questionnaire based on Ransom and Mangi (2009). A study situated in a Kenyan marine national park found out that foreign visitors are often willing to contribute more than domestic visitors. However, in Kenya, the level of income is on average much lower than worldwide (Ransom & Mangi, 2009, p. 152). In indigenous communities' tourism can contribute as a significant source of income for the community members but also for the conservation of the nearby protected areas. These gateway communities can benefit greatly from the tourism development with the employment and financial opportunities, infrastructure, cultural and environmental protection. Also, clearly defined frameworks for increasing the benefits from tourism development for protected area communities are necessary in order for tourism to support them more directly for community and conservation development (Bennett & et al., 2012, p. 754).

Nature-based tourism contributes to conservation development and usually involves at least positive symbiosed relationships among tourism, biodiversity and local communities, which is being implemented by proper management (Ross & Wall, 1999; Eagles, 2002). At the same time, it is important to remember, that as studying the willingness to pay is important, it should be understood what the proper price range should be, as the establishment of an "unsuccessful" price tag can cost many tourists to not visit at all. Also, the more expensive the required equipment used, the higher willingness to pay for protected area visit. For instance, divers and scuba divers tend to have the most of willingness to pay for these services (Riley & et al., 2006, p. 4-7). Ecotourism can be perceived as mass tourism as well according to Weaver (2001). Ecotourism has the traits of nature-based tourism which then is a form of alternative tourism, but then has the virtuous traits that mass tourism usually does not have. Weaver (2001) argues that ecotourism as reality and an ideal can be considered as a "form" of mass tourism. Eventually, Weaver defines ecotourism as a form of nature-based tourism that is looking to ecologically, socio-culturally and economically to be sustainable while offering opportunities for appreciation and educating about the natural environment (Weaver, 2001, p. 104-105). When it comes to the management of protected areas, little attention has been put to the situation of the management of the protected areas at regional as well as global level. There has not been a mutually agreed methodology that could be utilized, and no organization has not been entitled for such responsibility to collect this data. However, some organizations like WCPA (known as the Commission on national parks and protected areas) and the World conservation monitoring center (WCMC) have contributed by conducting a global protected area database (Hockings & et al., 2000, p. 8).

As ecotourism and protected areas have been tied to critical dimensions like social, cultural and economic aspects, protected area management has been thus highlighted in a political context more often. The goal to conserve natural areas is often affected by the objective to encourage recreational use, especially with emphasis on government goals in the name of economic development and the role of ecotourism. Also, when looking at the connection between tourism and nature conservation and when separating the discussion related to the national parks, the definition of a discourse must be understood (Borrie & et al., 1999; Puhakka, 2007, p. 52). Discourses are social comprehensions and considerations about the nature of reality; ways to understand and to present the world. Puhakka & Puhakka (2007) sees definitions about various conservation and tourism related connections between them and their definitions as social ways of thinking and speaking about the world, that are tied to culture, that are ever changing timely but also locally (Puhakka, 2007, p. 52).

A study done in a Finnish national park showed that locals consider a nearby national park as a threat to locals' livelihoods and quality of life as the satisfaction would decrease otherwise according to Petäjistö and Selby (2008). On the other hand, the locals considered the nearby local areas as an attractive tourist destination and believed that tourism would bring economic growth to the area. Most of the locals also saw nature preservation as an important factor, especially from the harms of tourism. It was stressed lastly, that the locals 'voices are not heard enough or at all. Even though they saw that they cannot have an influence, they still wanted their perspective of things to be acknowledged (Petäjistö & Selby, 2008, p. 14).

Tourism has become one of the most urgent phenomena of our current times. Tourism, already in the late 90s was holding about 7% of all of the world's trade according to Saarinen and Järviluoma (1998). This has led to cities and areas being built with tourism business opportunities in mind. Many countries have even become dependent on tourism (Saarinen & Järviluoma, 1998). When it comes to tourism on protected areas however, globally, the estimated spending on the protected areas has risen to approximately to 6,5 billion US dollars annually (Saporiti, 2006). Unfortunately, to cover the costs of conservation, 12-45 billion US dollars are estimated to be needed. Also, only 12% of this is spent in the developing countries that usually have the best biodiversity attributes. In these countries, it is even hard for the staff members to get their salaries or enough equipment to function (Saporiti, 2006). Juutinen, Mitani, Mäntymaa, Shoji, Siikamäki and Svento (2011) conducted a study based on Oulanka national park focusing on combining ecological and recreational aspects in the management of a national park. They claim, as the national parks have become more popular, park managers urgent need to develop has to be recognized. Finnish

protected areas have done well in a global comparison, but the goals are a bit different that in most countries. Finnish national parks are looking to integrate the socio-economic goals of ecotourism with the ecological goals of conservation by conducting the basic fundamentals of sustainability (Juutinen & et al., 2011; Puhakka, 2008).

Conservation and restoration of terrestrial ecosystems are dependent on international funds, grants, private donations and/or state funds. Protected areas are being damaged due to limitations on financial provisions for conservation development; the situation is even worse for forests that are being unprotected (Iranah & et al., 2018). Ecosystem services of national parks are not often traded on markets, which has led for them for not having specific market price – this usually means scarcity on the resources. To ascertain the value of ecosystem services while paying respect for the establishment and management of protected area, a variety of economic methods for valuing these non-market benefits have been established (Povazan & et al., 2014, p. 1699). de Castro, Souza and Thapa (2015) consider visitor use management also as an important tool for additional employment and income for local communities that are in the very presence of the protected areas. Also, the attributes of the protected areas in addition with the regional characteristics and visitation volume are key elements for planning and management goals. Visitation often is decided through paying attention to external factors like access, accommodation and available services not linked to the park (de Castro & et al., 2015).

Middleton & et al (2021) claim that spillover effects have caused challenges for the management of protected areas as well. The problems caused by external threats facing protected areas have been issued for long, but tackling those threats is an expensive matter to overcome. In the name of fairness, it is suggested for protected area users to contribute by paying some of the costs. Many countries have implemented ways of distributing the costs of spillover effects for protected area consumers (Middleton & et al., 2021). Alkire (2000) in her study used a different definition than most studies, which has been protected area management in these cases. Instead, she talks about wilderness management. Wilderness protection has been a never-ending challenge for public land managers due to the competition about the federal funds. The study shows that in the US, various funding alternatives have been recognized much earlier than elsewhere globally. In the beginning of 2000s funding strategies for wilderness management included means like reform, public funds, public investment, donations, private initiatives, capturing ecosystem service values and state funding (Alkire, 2000, p. 168).

Fees for recreation services on public areas have a history that is also long but controversial according to Fix and Vaske (2007). Many studies have been implemented on the impacts of charging entry fees and such on public lands and whether if it is appropriate or not. The biggest supporting factor for this idea has been that it provides more allocation of the recreation resources, but also that it would increase equality in a sense that only those using the services are the ones paying for them (Fix & Vaske, 2007, p. 611). Two decades ago, the United States Congress had directed a legislation for authorizing fees for recreation on developed and undeveloped lands like congressionally designated wilderness areas. Such practice represented a major inconsistency in the earlier fee collection methods, where fees were applied to only areas where major investments and infrastructure was found (Vogt & Williams, 1999, p. 86).

Recreation has recognized also as a major policy impetus for the establishment of the protected areas globally according to Chantale-Pelletier & et al (2021). Wider environmental scaling dedicated to several ecosystem services are needed to better support the investment decisions and policy development. Integrated decision-making requires thought on how the numerous methods and measures related to different ecosystem services could be fitting together. In national accounts, the national parks recreation value is only partially captured by markets or dedicated for other economic activities. Unfortunately, this usually results in national parks assets being considered as worthless, except for the entry fees. Valuation of the conservation in national parks is indeed difficult, but the recreation value can be shown, however (Chantale-Pelletier & et al., 2021).

3. Theoretical background of the study

3.1 Practice theory

This study focuses on different practices and why they are being used in specific situations in a way they are being used. In this study practices are considered in the context of the Finnish Lapland national parks. Why the current practices are being used and what would be to happen if hypothetical practices were to be used. Hence, it must be understood what is meant with the concept of practice and what practice theory is about. Subfields like anthropology and sociology as well as related subfields have in growing manner used practices as their first object of study during the last decades according to Rouse (2007). Various practices require extensive examination of related equipment and material culture, but it can also contribute to determining constitutive roles to vocabulary and other relevant linguistic forms and actions. Theoretical use of practice theory within social theory and philosophy of social sciences are as diverse as the sorts of instances applied (Rouse, 2007, p. 599).

Nicolini (2012) states that practice theories are important to be studied and understood, simply because the practice idiom has become more popular and fashionable. As the practices have become more and more popular in various fields, major growth can be seen in analyzes that utilize means like, for instance, practice, praxis, interaction, activity, performativity and performance. The increased interest shows attention to material practices in social and human sciences at most (Nicolini, 2012). The foundations of practice theory can be found from the diverse strands of the writings from the scientists of Bordieu, Giddens, Geertz, Sahlins and de Certeau (Breiger, 2000, p. 93). They are, in short, a set of cultural and philosophical accounts that focus on situations around the practical outcomes of our social lives. It also has foundations from the philosophies of Heidegger and Wittgenstein. According to Halkier, Katz-Gerro and Martens (2011) it can be argued that practice theories are being used for occupying salient theoretical space among social sciences and humanities (Halkier & et al., 2011, p. 4).

Recently there has been increased interest for utilizing social practice theory for theorizing consumption, especially in relation to transforming manners that have negative environmental impacts (Sahakian & Wilhite, 2014). Practice theory should be able to account for power. This demand has two categories that it could be divided to: one intellectual and the other is more pragmatic. The intellectual side is based on the ubiquity of power as a part of social relations (Watson, 2016).

Watson (2016) brings up the question about if practice theory is only based on power. If power is understood as acting in its most basic of levels, then practice theory could be interpreted as essentially being about power only. Accepting the power inherent in the acting of individual persons does not tell everything. Practice theory is probably understood at its best as an emphasis on the influence in human action by relations and phenomena external to the person conducting any such action. This can happen as far as to the practice theory is at times part of preventing human agency or making an issue on the possibility of social change (Watson, 2016, p. 2).

When it comes to tourism, according to Bargeman and Richards (2020) analysis of tourism practices usually are becoming more separated from practice theories but are still heavily based on them. Also, in tourism context, the main strands of practice theory display attendant strengths and weak points. However, integrated practice theory might be useful in tourism related research. Integrated practice theory can assist in defining tourism participation, but it is also looking to figure out the dynamics in tourism related practices (Bargeman & Richards, 2020).

Increase in academic tourism studies during the last decades has shown many epistemological, theoretical and also methodological opportunities. Tourism as multidisciplinary industry, tourism theory has contributed from many different fields of knowledge. Tourism knowledge is also scattered and has revealed several beliefs and areas that allow tourism theory to stay under discussion and debate with difficult positions. It is interesting, however, that the very first tourism studies in the 1960s were related to the fields of business, anthropology, sociology and geography – which then allowed tourism to be seen as multidisciplinary. After that in the 1980s and 1990s, tourism science changed the approach philosophically and also institutionally to business and management focused approaches. After that, an important separation happened when tourism studies were divided to two separate networks in tourism, which were ultimately social science and business and economics. This was not hoped as it was then considered as simplistic and reductionist (de Souza Bispo, 2016, p. 173).

3.2 Practice theory approach in tourism research

Contemporary theories about practice have justified their mettle in various social disciplines. This particular mixture of thoughts has ever long showed theoretical separation that has only widened after the turn of the millennium through a proliferation of “praxeologies” and approaches based on practices. This separation is also matched by a consistently widening bounty of empirical studies

that elaborate both familiar and obscure perspectives of social life. This set of theories has proved to be rather useful in tourism research. Such ontologies promulgating in the theories of practice, as well as those showcasing wide social theories of all sorts, are claiming to be able to cover several various social phenomena (Schatzki, 2018 as cited in James, Ren & Halkier, 2018).

Sorensen, Sundbo and Jensen (2020) argue that practice theory itself can provide new approaches for considering innovation and value creation – especially in experience and service-oriented sectors that are molded by consumer – service interactions and co-creation and also co-annihilation of value. Usefulness of practice theory can be seen at its best when focusing on what actors do, how institutional structures succeed in common practices and how actors use their embodied information in dynamic acts of meaning-attempt to deal with common issues that are faced consistently (Sorensen & et al., 2020, p. 272).

In the context on practices of tourism and sustainability, Sorensen and Baerenholdt (2020) claim that because of tourism global socio-cultural and economic liability, sustainable changes should always include tourism as well. Unfortunately, sustainability in tourism industry has not been able provide concrete results, but only moral judgement, ideology and branding. Hence, Sorensen and Baerenholdt (2020) suggest that there is little to no proof on tourism practices contributing to climate responsibility whatsoever. Circular economy tourist practices are aimed to be wished for the future. Figuring future practices is not easy but there are manners on how to address and put future on the agenda in a way that questioning and changing our current practices becomes desired (Sorensen & Baerenholdt, 2020).

Practice theory can also be applied in tourism planning as tourism planning is considered as the leading driver to leverage growth, development or economic changes at times of surprising changes and adversity. With practice theory and tourism planning research tourism planning practices can be investigated and attempted to be improved (Ricaurte-Quijano & et al., 2024). Tourism activities can also be seen as practices and especially social practices. Practice theories in tourism are in fact less common, but they display the merits of the practice theories to comprehend tourism production consumption challenges (Lamers & et al., 2017). But as there are differences conceptually, reflective and pluralist consideration is recommended to recognize the multiplicity of contemporary practice theories and by utilizing the positives of various theories to grasp the practices explicitly we are part of (Nicolini 2012; Lamers & et al., 2017).

4. Methodology of the study

4.1 Qualitative research as an approach

This study uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research in general is a systematic inquiry into social phenomena from a perspective where it is seen in its usual setting (Teherani & et al., 2015, p. 669). These phenomena can, for instance, include how people consider their own lives at the moment in a certain context, how groups or individual act or how organizations behave in particular scenarios. The researcher is the leading driver in the data collection when it comes to qualitative research. Hence, the researcher analyzes why particular events take place, what is happening and how these events shape the people and groups related to the phenomena (Teherani & et al., 2015, p. 669). I chose qualitative approach to be used in this study as I considered it to be the most suitable approach for this study as it allows to collect and analyze data that is more efficient in this type of research. Also, the research methods were more justified in this sort of study in social sciences.

Alase (2017) considers qualitative research as methodology that adds an additional benefit for the exploratory capability that scientists need in order to analyze and investigate in their research. Some researchers may consider qualitative approach to be a tough decision for having it as a research approach. However, qualitative approach is the best option when wanting to have an approach that is adaptable, but also participant-oriented which allows to have authentic data from real life experiences (Alase, 2017). While qualitative research has developed, scientists have had problems with a consistent tension with the demand for methodological flexibility and structure. During this development in qualitative research, three foundational methodologies are considered most often: phenomenology, ethnography and grounded theory. New methodologies have been implemented since then, such as discourse analysis, life history and narrative inquiry, which are, in fact, utilized commonly in qualitative research (Kahlke, 2014, p.13).

Hyett, Kenny and Dickson-Swift (2014) argue that the future of the qualitative research is determined and will be determined by the manners, which qualitative research is implemented by, and by what such studies are being published and reviewed. There is also a certain level of artistic license that is part of the qualitative researchers, which leads to distinguishing practice, which then allows creativity and innovations to flourish. This creative freedom bears responsibility to provide justification in describing methodological choices. Especially case studies seem to lack in providing justification in methodological choices in qualitative studies. In social sciences, it is not common enough to explain why such case was chosen to be studied amongst all others. Such issues call for

methodological integrity and honesty, which are the fundamentals for the traditions of qualitative research and ethical demands (Hyett & et al., 2014, p.2 & 8). In this study, when it comes to the qualitative approach, I am utilizing future-oriented approach as one of the purposes of the study is to attempt to predict futures possibilities.

4.2 Data collection

Future studies are a type of research where possible, probable or even desirable outcomes are attempted to find out, but also conditions for these in the past and the present moment according to Kreibich & et al (2011). Nowadays future research suggests that the future is not completely possible to determine, which is why several possibilities for the future are more than possible. This study is using a future-oriented approach, which is why the approach is important to be presented. It is important to want to study the future and that's why future is always been a topic under research since the human existence (Kreibich & et al., 2011).

Future studies are also a systematic method for studying possibilities and futures that are rather preferable, which include worldviews and, perhaps, myths that underlie every possible future (Inayatullah, 2013). During the past decades the future research has changed from predictive means to finding out several alternative futures for finding the most preferred one in external collective levels and inner personal dimensions. As the theory of a future is necessary, a conceptual framework for comprehending the future is still needed. Inayatullah (2013) displays six pillars approach for the framework to be completed: The first step is mapping the future that uses the futures triangle as the initial method. Second pillar is expecting the future with emerging challenges analysis as the focal methodology. Third one is the timing of the future with "micro-, meso-, and macrohistory" as the most suitable methods for this. Fourth is deepening of the future with causal layered analysis as the basis. Fifth pillar is establishing alternatives with planning scenarios as the most suitable method. Finally, the last pillar is the transformation of the future, which has vision and back casting as the most important methods (Inayatullah, 2013).

Future studies have been used much in attempting to study possibilities in the corporate world (Schwarz, 2008). Hence, strategic management and future studies are aligned in a way that they both claim to recognize the complexity and dynamic in corporate environment in an alarmingly way due to its increase. Management is highly interested in studying the future as it has high meaning for planning and for making decisions. Thus, expectations of the future in planning processes can be

seen in early stages even, as all actions and decision give a hint or a glimpse from what the future can be. There are three most known methods in future studies that are the Delphi technique, scenario technique and forecasting. Schwarz (2008) also identifies methods of simulation and gaming, but also techniques for creative thinking about the future, which can be seen in many forms (Schwarz, 2008). In this study forecasting is attempted as a future studies approach.

The research data consists of eight interviews with representatives from different organizations related to forestry, forest services, recreational services and natural resources in northern Finland. Although the interviews focus on Finnish national parks, the interviewees that were asked to participate in the research represent organizations that work under the previously mentioned areas due to the fact that the study was wanted to focus to northern Finnish national parks due to their clear difference in comparison to other areas of Finland. This is because the national parks of Finland in northern parts are highly more popular (Luontoon.fi, 2024), which is why the interviewees knew more about the situation of the northern national parks which was the intent all along. Employees that were expected to have expertise and knowledge on national parks and their situation were wanted to have for the interviews and thus contacted. Mostly, the contacted people were employees of Metsähallitus and Luonnonvarakeskus (LUKE) National resource institute of Finland.

The employees that were the most wanted for the interview were not only supervisors, but also specialists, senior specialists and also researchers. With this sort of sample, it was expected to be able to have the most justified prediction of the future due to their expertise on the studied phenomenon. The other requirement was that their office was located in northern Finland meaning residing in the regions of Lapland, Kainuu and northern Ostrobothnia. Representatives from all these regions were fortunately present in this study, with most emphasis on Lapland, however. Various working titles were present also, and therefore different opinions and views were seen, which was the goal with this sample.

Table 1. Information about the interviewees

P1	Lapland region	Luke
P2	Lapland region	Metsähallitus
P3	Lapland region	Metsähallitus
P4	Lapland region	Metsähallitus
P5	Kainuu region	Metsähallitus
P6	Northern Ostrobothnia	Classified
P7	Northern Ostrobothnia	Metsähallitus
P8	Lapland region	Metsähallitus

The interviews were held in Teams as video calls during March and April of 2024 lasting from 30 minutes to 60 minutes. They were recorded for transcription and the interviewees were aware of this and also about their anonymization and the deletion of the data after the study was published. The letter of consent was provided by all the eight interviewees. The interviewees will be cited as P1-P8 and only their region where they were working in, and organization will be revealed to protect their anonymity (except for P6 due to a request). No names or titles will be revealed for these reasons as well. The topic was very sensitive for many participants which is why it is important to protect their personal information.

The data was transcribed from the original data set with Microsoft Word and the most important words and paragraphs were transcribed in order to utilize the means of content analysis. There were three themes in the interviews consisting of 20 questions; semi-structured interviews were utilized to collect the research data. This is why the interviewees were allowed freely to talk about their opinions and views, and thus some questions were answered beforehand and without asking.

After the data collection and transcribing the text, it was time to move on to the analysis process of the study and revealing the results. With the means of content analysis, and more specifically, summative content analysis, I will analyze the data and results of this study. This will lead to making the final conclusions of the study and implication for future research. All of this will be attempted with the means of ethics of the research, which I attempt to follow to the best of my ability, which are stated in the research ethics chapter (See chapter 4.4). The rules and promises of the letter of consent will be followed through as well for the privacy of the interviewees. After reading through literature about previously mentioned topics I understand the responsibility and

importance of the information that I have the privilege to own for a temporary period of time. Thus, I treat and consider this responsibility with respect and humility, which it requires.

4.3 Content analysis as an analysis method of research

Content analysis is a popular research method, especially in social work and in related disciplines and industries. There are three major approaches to content analysis: basic content analysis focusing on contributing on content and using statistic analyzing. Second one is the interpretive content analysis that focuses on manifesting content but also on latent content. The last one is the qualitative content analysis, which has the same attributes that the interpretive content analysis has (Drisko & Maschi, 2016, p.5). Content analysis is the key analysis method of the study at hand, which is why in this chapter content analysis will be explained and considered.

As a general definition content analysis is considered as a method for analyzing the contents of diverse samples of data – even visual or verbal data. It allows the reduction of phenomena or occasions to be categorized in order to have improved measure on analyzing and considering them. As a methodology, content analysis can be either qualitative or quantitative. However, in qualitative terms, the method is often used in the developing parts of the study. In quantitative research, it is mostly used when studying volumes of the particular phenomenon (Harwood & Garry, 2003, p. 480).

Stemler (2015) argues that during the times of larger data sets or big data, content analysis as a research method is possibly the most effective method for a researcher in this setting. Content analysis is diverse enough to allow textual, visual and audio data. Since the massive growth on permanent linguistic, photographic and audio data increasing from the proliferation of technology, content seems to be on a groundbreaking situation of its history. During the past two decades technology of the modern era has revolutionized the way humans connect. The mutual access for almost everyone for e-mail, internet, social media and mobile phones etc., has created this never-ending amount of archived data about us as individuals (Stemler, 2015).

Content analysis is a widely spread data analysis method that has developed during its treatment of textual data. Originally, content analysis was presented as only a quantitative method looking at numbers to analyze volumes and frequencies of pre-identified objects in research. Eventually, the qualitative paradigm became more prevalent in social sciences, which moved researchers to be

keener on how people act on certain natural settings. This is when content analysis was switched to become a more interesting and significant approach. This is also how content analysis became popular in medical science in terms of pharmacy education as well (Kleinheksel & et al., 2020).

Krippendorff (2018) argues that content analysis is one of the most important research methods there is when it comes to social sciences. With content analysis it is possible to understand that society can be studied through discussions, literature or other forms of communication. Also, understanding social phenomena is not possible without being able to understand linguistic operations are determined in the social world. Analyzes of content dive deep into social phenomena by considering data as communication rather than as concrete events. These social phenomena are being created and disseminated for to be seen, read, enacted and reflected on based on the meanings that they have for their readers. Analyzing communication in the forms of linguistic means in the context of their social meanings separates content analysis from the other possible methods of research (Krippendorff, 2018, p. 3).

In quantitative research, however, content analysis is often used to overcome surface level analyses in computer supported mutual learning. The statistical comparisons in the quantitative approach need a hypothesis apart from theory, which is then designed prior to the event. Hence, the reliability of quantitative content analysis could be questioned as a proper research method (Strijbos & et al., 2006, p. 33). Content analysis is often related with the research on inscription contained in published reports, news, books and journals and such. The relation with content analysis with texts and documents is extendedly highlighted in the current discussions of the method. This is why content analysis can be comprehended as an approach for the analysis of particularly documents and textual data that is attempting to quantify content in the name of priorly determined categories (Prior, 2014, p. 360).

Prasad (2008) however, considers content analysis in a slightly different manner – although fundamentally in similar terms: content analysis is a scientific analysis method of content of communication. Bernard Berelson is considered to be one of the pioneers of content analysis; going back all the way to 1950s where it was then seen as the analysis method of communication research. A diverse method for especially social science and media studies, which was then liked by history and politics scholars as well. Eventually, social scientists and media researchers found it more suitable for them. Content analysis was developed the most, however, during the era of World

War two when the US government supported the method to analyze the propaganda of the axis (Prasad, 2008).

Elo and Kyngäs (2008) consider content analysis as a research method which can be used with qualitative and quantitative data in an inductive or deductive way. Qualitative content analysis is often used in nursing studies. However, there is not that many publishes on the analysis process and generally only some research books give a rather brief definition of the method. In short, content analysis is a research method for systematically and objectively describing and quantifying phenomena. It is widely considered as a method for analyzing written data like documents. Content analysis provides a chance for the scholar to test theoretical problems to improve understanding of the data. With content analysis it is possible to divide words, for instance, to fewer categories. Then the assumption is that the categories with classifications of the words and such have shared the same meaning (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p.108; Krippendorf, 2018).

Nowadays, it is easier than ever to acquire content according to Skalski, Kimberly, Neuendorf and Cajigas (2017). The internet has allowed a new age in content getting. The amount of content out there has become possible due to the digitization of pictures and videos. Thanks to the internet uploading and downloading of various data has become easier than ever for everyone (Skalski & et al., 2017, p. 213).

Qualitative content analysis is one of the several qualitative research methods for analyzing written textual data. It is a very generic form of data analysis method as it is a set of an atheoretical set of ways that can be used in every qualitative inquiry in general where the informational content itself of the data is relevant. Qualitative content analysis is a very contrasted method for the ones that usually focus on bringing theoretical perspectives. For instance, narrative analysis is using a hermeneutical perspective that embraces interpretation and context and then focuses on the core of the stories and the devices people use to make a meaning in the story. Some qualitative inquiry like ethnography, grounded theory, and some phenomenology's that, even though they provide a theoretical perspective to the qualitative inquiry, they use content analysis for the analysis eventually (Forman & Damschroder, 2007, p. 41).

Indeed, qualitative content analysis is meant for all analysis of recorded communication, like transcripts, discourses, protocols and videos, for instance according to Mayring (2004). Qualitative content analysis defines itself in accordance with the approach of empirical, methodological

controlled analysis of written communication. This is done by following content analytical rules and models without major quantification (Mayring, 2004, p.164).

Content analysis is indeed a commonly used research method in qualitative research. Rather than being a single method, nowadays it is seen with three different approaches that are conventional, directed and summative content analysis. However, all three approaches have the same goal, which is interpreting and analyzing the meanings from the textual data – hence adhere to the naturalistic paradigm. The differences in these approaches come from the different coding measures they utilize, origins of the codes and threats to integrity. In conventional content analysis the coding categories are separated straight from the textual data. However, with the directed approach, the analysis begins with a theory review or with the relevant research results, for instance working as a foundation for the upcoming codes. Finally, summative content analysis uses counting and comparisons; usually this means keywords or content specifically, which is then followed by the analysis of the context behind the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1277). Also, White and Marsh (2006) content analysis as a flexible methodology: it is often used in, for example, in library and information sciences that have several various research objectives. The method is used in various disciplines; qualitative, quantitative and even sometimes in mixed methods research (White & Marsh, 2006).

However, when considering the differences with content analysis in qualitative research, the separation comes from the fact that each method addresses issues of power and hierarchy in different ways. With discourse analysis the main point that is tried to solve is based on which power relations structure, constrain and produce systems of meaning. Even though both methods are attempting to uncover social reality and truth, they differ fundamentally in their assumptions about the nature of that reality and especially about the role of language in those cases. To finalize, discourse analysis looks for the relation with text and context, content analysis on the text abstracted from the contexts. Thus, discourse analysts see change and flux and content analysts on the other hand consistency and reliability (Hardy & et al., 2004). As the final notes, qualitative content analysis produces a set of text analysis measures for integrating qualitative and quantitative steps of analysis which then makes it a mixed methods approach according to Mayring (2015). Such contribution defines it as a background of quantitative content analysis and the mirrors it with other social science text analysis approaches like grounded theory, for instance. The basic theoretical and methodological hypotheses are elaborated. However, as a last procedure with

content analysis, the procedures are evaluated with similar techniques and strengths and weaknesses are considered (Mayring, 2015).

4.4 Research ethics

In any research process there are three essential processes in terms of learning: At the beginning something is learned about the studied object. Then the process proceeds towards the understanding of doing research itself. Lastly, in most cases something can be learnt about the researcher itself, especially if the researcher oneself exposes him/herself to a studied group for an extensive period of time according to Ryan (2005). What is important, however that the ethical behavior is something that every researcher must embrace in the very core of research. This happens due to the fact that the researcher is handed with several responsibilities that must be accepted by the researcher. The researcher has responsibility over many things like research participants for instance, and also of the results that are being produced for the ones reading and them – supervisor of the research and such. The last one which is the most important one is the responsibility over the knowledge being produced; is it truthful or not. The researcher is the one in power that one's must understand when producing science as knowledge of the world is being produced which might be considered as the truth eventually, which brings authority and responsibility about it most of all (Ryan, 2005, p. 9-10). In this study I consider the research ethics from this perspective that is mentioned previously but also with this particular approach: Treating the acquired authority and responsibility with the respect it demands while also protecting the anonymity of the interviewees by not sharing too much personal information about them. Also, I attempt to not reveal any insights in the analysis chapter that might have potential to reveal the identity of the participants.

Historically there has been less discussion on research ethics aspect in the tourism research literature (Moscardo, 2010). In the earlier stages of tourism scholars, it is common that the scientists have been led by the manners of ethical research practice of the disciplines that they were trained with at the beginning. If most tourism scholars had degrees in anthropology, economics or sociology, for instance, and conducted research with the ethical approach that existed in these disciplines, then there probably was less of a need to consider ethics of research. Even though there are instances of manners for ethical conduct for tourist and operators there still appears to not be a manner for tourism researchers, however. Nowadays, it would finally be a time to start considering the ethical issues as well in the tourism research field as well (Moscardo, 2010).

According to Frechtling (2018) ethics and moral in tourism are a major part of tourism. Mostly the ethics in tourism research have focused on the ethical standards related to the behaviors of operators and guests. Less studies on tourism research ethics have been published, but at least some.

However, these studies have only focused on chosen problems related to researcher interaction with guests and operators as the studies objects. There is a growing awareness on the demand for more critical and reflective approaches in tourism research. This is because tourism is very susceptible for ethical and moral issues in many ways, which is why it is surprising that how there are so few studies on the matter (Frechtling, 2018, p. 1054; Moscardo, 2010). MacCannell (2012) also agrees that less emphasis on tourism research ethics has been discussed in the tourism scholar community. Tourism researchers should be held accountable for not being able to communicate the role of ethics in the tourism research effectively. Ethics allow unique access for subjective and intersubjective relation in tourism. This means the limits of what does and can happen among tourists and related stakeholders. Authenticity in tourism is nowadays something that is being embraced heavily – also researchers as well. However, invocations of authenticity are intentionally or unwittingly unethical, because among tourists and operators there is a symbolic dynamic going on which is basically “staged authenticity” (MacCannell, 2012, p.187).

It is widely agreed that tourism is in obvious sense one of the most unethical industries there is due to the exploitation of indigenous people and lands for business and humans’ hedonistic experiences according to Fennell (2006). The core of tourism ethics seems to reside in the hospitality management fundamentals for the development of hospitable service and business. In the 1990s the tourism ethics was recognized as a phenomenon by the scholars, but nothing was done for improving those issues. Some development happened however and sustainable tourism definition for that time was established: 1. tourism should not degrade resources and must be developed in environmentally friendly manner. 2. It must provide participatory and eye-opening experiences. 3. It must include education among all stakeholders like, locals, governments, industry and tourists etc. (Fennell, 2006, p. 9).

Sustainable ethical tourism practices are indeed necessary if the earth can be sustained from the tourism development. Thus, tourism must be developed with an approach that includes standards where ethics and morale are considered largely. Also, one of the largest challenges in tourism research is being able to find an ethical way for facilitating tourism research that moves towards the paradigm of objectivity and frontier thinking to take part in more analytical, reflexive and sustainable basis (Macbeth, 2005).

Tourism and its immense growth internationally are to blame for the global climate issues nowadays. The climate is one of the main reasons why tourism is from an ethical standpoint a very challenging problem for everyone to go through from every perspective. Whether you are a tourist or a business owner, knowing that your actions contribute negatively to the growing emissions especially in aviation is crucial for what is to come in terms of the climate change. All sorts of solutions have been presented like carbon taxes and biofuels etc. but it is left to be seen whether a permanent solution will be found (Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013, p. 153).

4.5 Analysis process

In the analysis process when utilizing qualitative content analysis like in this study, the analysis consists of de-contextualization and re-contextualization according to Lindgren & et al (2020). These are most crucial parts of the analysis and de-contextualization demands that the data is cut in pieces to be able to be separated from its underlying context, which can affect the analysis process. In qualitative content analysis this is done by separation where the text is put into specific units and condensing and finally coding of the units. De-contextualization simply means that from interviews is separated from the context in the beginning of the analysis and this will display the experience of the studied phenomenon under research of the interviewees. After this re-contextualization is done by combining the separated data sets to new patterns and back to the original context to allow deeper comprehension of the studied phenomenon. The codes are sorted in terms of their commonalities and differences and then putting them to sub-categories and categories. Finally, the results can be discussed in comparison to current studies and related literature (Lindgren & et al., 2020).

When discussing about the analysis process of qualitative research data, the researcher is not involved with statistics, which could be initial idea. Tesch (2013) claims that no researcher has ever coded the procedures to make a qualitative analysis, and no one ever will most probably. Often what happens is that qualitative researchers state that, when discussing about methods, it is not often the only suitable method for the kind of research they are doing when talking about their methods. Thus, everyone should feel free to utilize freely these methods in whatever way they see fit. This means that qualitative analysis process is rather adjustable and modifiable, which allows it to be used in variety of ways. However, analysis is the part of the process where narrative data is attempted to make sense of. The most important notion on qualitative analysis is that it should not be standardized when it comes to the results that it provides – because computers would attempt the same if they would be allowed to do that (Tesch, 2013, p. 3-4).

This study uses content analysis as a method of analysis process. Several tourism studies have used this method in the analysis process according to Camprubi and Coromina (2016). It is a popular method in social sciences in general and is often utilized to study many forms of human interaction that might include written data like documents, transcripts, but also pictures, videos or audio, for instance. In tourism, content analysis could be very much used to study marketing and advertisements. The evaluation of the context behind texts written by tourists is one example or even identifying many understandings of conceptual problems in tourism as well (Camprubi & Coromina, 2016).

The analysis will be done with the future-oriented approach while considering the theory of practice, which is the theoretical practice that this study is heavily relying on. Therefore, I attempt to make suggestions for the future and, possibly, to the best of my ability consider what is the future going to look like from the context of the topic of this study. I will also consider, what would be the best outcome from my own view but from also from the view of the experts of the field that I have interviewed. Doing so, I believe it is possible to make conclusions from the theoretical perspective while looking at practice theory, to conclude is it reasonable to continue with the current practice in the Finnish national parks or with other practices. I will look at three possibilities which are: 1. continuing with the current practice (free entry, additional user fees). 2. Voluntary fees available. 3. Mandatory entry fees and user fees on specific activities inside the national park. I will then also attempt to answer the research questions. These three themes were chosen because they were brought up during the data-collection, but also because they were mentioned in the previous research.

I started by looking at with what kind of words the interviewees answered to the interview questions one by one. Before the analysis process I had a feeling of three different categorizations on where to put the interviewees in terms of what they considered to be the best practice. By looking at the three themes of the interview I begin to look at the questions and answers: leading to the analysis with the means of summative content analysis. Doing so, the main research question of the study can be answered and made conclusions of: What is expected to happen if Finnish national parks would start to charge entry fees for entering a national park?

Then the sub questions will be answered with the same technique considering the three interview themes. The sub-questions were: 1. Why the current practice is being used and what are the positive

and negative effects of it? 2. What kind of effects such change would cause in funding, visitors, and in the nature and management of the parks? 3. What kind of role specific user fees have and would have in these themes? Finally, based on the results and analysis, suggestions for the future will be made from my point of view and the interviewees.

I started by looking at the themes, which were the current state of the Finnish national parks, fees and the hypothetical effects of the possible fees in national parks. I transcribed from the textual data from the Teams-interviews that were recoded the relevant parts where the questions were answered. This was justified and reasonable when considering the methods of the study and the purpose of the study, which was to gain understanding of the current state of the current practice and national parks, and would it be reasonable to start charging fees or stay with the current practice. With means of practice theory this will be considered as at the end of the day, the main concern here is the use of practice.

I will start the analysis by first giving my initial analysis in general about the themes and its answers and then making a conclusion of it. Before the interviews, my expectation was that some would support the current practice, and some would be against it. It seemed to be somewhat correct assumption, but I was mistaken. However, there were some who were sort of in the middle of this. In general, though the polarization of the opinions was rather interesting, and I was curious where it would stem from. Before doing the specific analysis I want to emphasize my initial thoughts, to highlight the importance of the interpretation that I made based on the way of the way the interviewees answered the questions. This is not the main point of the research and analysis but should be considered briefly. However, as said before, the content still is the main point under research in the study. It was clear that the interviewees answers were opinions and views, and not everything was based on statistics and facts. Their expertise should be still seen as the most suitable when it comes to this study and hence justifies the future orientation of this study. It seemed that in the opinions of the interviewees were in some cases based on ideology and belief of certain fundamentals, fear of change, never changing culture and habits and even political orientation. This is evident due to the fact the governments of Finland have the power of the funding of Metsähallitus as most of their services are free. It was critiqued how the funding has dropped over the years and the current government was critiqued heavily for even larger decreases in funding, which has led to undesired situations in Metsähallitus.

It was clear that the previous government of Finland was praised for supporting the establishment of new national parks like in Salla, for instance. The interviewees who supported the previous government were clearly against the fees if it would be to happen. In some cases, it was even hard for them to answer the questions related to the possibility that was just a hypothesis. These persons were only in some parts able to allow a voluntary fee, but nothing else. However, some interviewees were quite the opposite: these persons would allow and even hoped for adding voluntary fees, but also mandatory fees and some user fees. This was based on the comparisons abroad where it was common to have an entry fee. This was supported by the large number of foreign tourists. However, the countering reason of the people against this emphasized the difficulty of surveillance and the resources to gather these fees. Violations would become more common, and it would be impossible to gather enough resources for it leading to opposition and boycotting. These were my initial thoughts before the actual analysis process, which I found interesting to point out at first. However, now I will move on to presenting the results and analysis by also in comparison to previous research. I will begin by going to through the questions and themes in order.

5 Analysis

5.1 Current state of the national parks

The first theme was the current state of the Finnish national parks, and the interviewees were asked about how they see the current situation of the national parks in general, what they would improve in the parks and how do they see the current situation in terms of funding. Before all this the participants were asked to tell their name and title for the recording and for how long they had worked in their current organization. In the first theme they were also asked about how the visitors experience could be improved, what values lead the managing and using of the parks. And lastly, how they would improve the funding practices for Metsähallitus, and what kind of feedback the visitors have given recently about the experience. I will begin the analysis by looking at the responses to this first theme by considering the keywords and content. In general, I attempt to make comparisons and find mutual connection to previous research as well.

In the first question when asked about the current state of the Finnish national parks, it is evident that one keyword stands out the most: funding. Funding has been decreasing according to the interviewees, which has led to repair debt. Major decreases in funding were mentioned often as a major issue, which has various consequences that can be seen as negative. Most of the interviewees talk about how the funding of Metsähallitus has decreased government after government. However, the previous government was praised for the establishment of new national parks in Kainuu and Lapland regions. Some other improvements were made, but the everlasting issues were not able to be fixed. This was seen in a better light still due to the fact that the current government has decreased the funding of Metsähallitus, which was criticized. P4 is worried about the situation due to the fact that it seems to be forgotten in some ways that why the national parks exist according to P4. On the other hand, P5 is not worried and considers the situation to be good in general. P3 is happy about the new national parks but the decrease of funding and repair debt worries P3. P1 and P2 are sharing this view partly, but P2 emphasizes the fact that how Covid-19 pandemic brought the domestic tourists to the parks and put lots of pressure for them and that caused issues in terms of erosion and detrition. P1 talks as the only interviewee about how big of a difference there is in the use of national parks in northern Finland compared to the southern parts. The number of visitors is so much bigger in the north that it causes pressure for these parks due to the grown numbers. It is so much calmer in the south where the parks are less crowded – except for Nuuksio in Espoo, which still cannot be compared to Urho Kekkonen national park, which was mentioned often.

In the second question it was asked if there were something they would improve when it comes to the management of the parks and protected areas. It was emphasized the importance of not forgetting the nature preservation and the animals that live in these areas. For instance, motor sled-tracks are being built to the living areas of some mammals and even reindeer herding areas, which is not desirable according to P1. P3 stresses similar aspects as P1, but also discusses the importance of staff that operates in the forest as there has been cutting in the staff resources as well, which might lead to not respecting the living areas of the mammals.

P4 continues with stress about specifically the managing of the parks – about how it can be managed with the required quality so it can be preserved. The cutting of the resources and taking care of the nature are similarly stressed here. Finally, P4 thinks that some fireplaces might have to be removed, for instance and this can cause hazardous situations if the visitors have to adapt by themselves if they have to bring their own firewood and finding a good place to make fire for. Erosion and overconsumption are a major concern here according to P4. Similar issues were discussed with the funding and lack of resources, which is the most common keyword detected here in this question which was preservation and funding. Lack of funding leads to cutting of resources in staff and ability to provide and take care of the nature, but the quality of the services inside the national parks. This happens because, based on the answers, Metsähallitus has used to a certain level of funding which has allowed the good quality of management and services. However, now the word stress is mentioned often, which is related to the fact that if something has to be removed, which is unseen. This seems like something so disturbing that it is not wanted to be even discussed further even though it is not reality yet, but something to be ready for. P5 in this question also shares opinion on Finns being already too adapted to the current practice of free entry and services. Thus, P5 thinks that this attitude should be forgotten, and some entry fees should be started to charge as the benefit would be significant and would help this situation with the funding tremendously.

Lastly, the word securing and maintain the quality of service in the parks is concerned due to the major decrease in funding. Most of the interviewees mention this word as a concern, which is a continuation to the concerned keywords and message that can be detected from the interviewees use of words. So once again, many things could be improved and developed but it is impossible without proper funding – and as the direction is rather negative due to the decreases, the concerns are justified. This concern is common when looking at the previous global research, where in almost all cases throughout the world the state funding has decreased decade after decade (see e.g. Walls, 2014; Samdin & et al., 2010; Tyrväinen & Tuulentie, 2007).

The third question was how the interviewees thought about the current funding situation and what kind of development there has been over the years. However, the question was not asked if it was answered already, which might have happened already when discussing about the funding. In those cases, this question was not asked.

It was revealed that prior to the current situation, a major funding was received for the natural services and for improvement of the parks, and that has been almost, if not already spent. Unfortunately, now the opposite has happened and a major decrease in funding has happened, which is why it must be discussed by Metsähallitus, whether some camping sites or fireplaces and such must be removed. There has been a major “breaking point” or rupture lately in the organization, which many of the interviewees mentioned as well with a similar term “murros” in the organization, which was seemingly an organizational term and all the others who mentioned it stated that this rupture is happening at the moment. This “rupture” was not opened much more but was mentioned the most in this question which is why it is crucial in this study. This can be in correlation with the fact there has been changes in funding but also in the staff, and based on the use of words it seemed that these changes have been so unprecedented that it was considered an organizational rupture/breaking point. This rupture was obviously negative and is in correlation with the current policy of the current government of Finland, which has taken the line of major cuts in state budget and Metsähallitus and the national parks have taken a hit as well.

This rupture can be seen concretely in the employee level when P3 in this question states that the current amount for dealing with accidental situations where something must be fixed in a national park in Lapland, for instance, is very low. Thus, only the most critical instruments and sites can be fixed in order to save the money that is pointed out for these hazards. However, P3 thinks that even in Lapland this money should be the highest so the situation could be even worse in the south. P4, P5, P6, P7 and P8 discuss similar issues in general as well. However, interesting mentions by P5 who points out instability in the funding, which is unfortunate that indicates that Metsähallitus has become used to a certain level of funding and the current is lower than probably ever; this can be interpreted from the use of words. Interestingly as well P8 says that the current government has interests and has indicated for Metsähallitus to initiate the possibility to collect the voluntary fees in terms of the entry. At the moment, the laws for being able to collect money is underway, but it can be difficult as it seems that the law is against this initiative. In this question is also evident the cutting of funds by the state, which now has caused this instability and rupture in the organization. The decrease of funds is so dramatic, that the use of words is indicating disappointment and shock

and even disbelief. Hence, it seems that it yet has not been accepted that the consequences of this must now be taken.

The fourth and fifth question were about the opinion of the visitors: what kind of feedback you have received from the visitors and how the visitors experience could be improved. The most common answer and keyword used for the feedback received was good. The feedback has been on a good level for a long time – even in creditable levels in some cases. This was commonly agreed and could be seen in the rather mutual considerations about the feedback even though it was not based on surveys as there had been less visitor surveys done lately.

When discussed about the improvements and how the participants would improve the visitor experience there was more separation and diverse answers. However, the most common concern was the decreases in the opening hours of the nature parks and the number of staff helping the visitors. For instance, P4 and P3 agree on the fact that some customer service points have been removed already and less staff are already taking care of the parks in Lapland, which is a point of improvement for them. P8 mentions the accessibility as the only interviewee, but also the over crowdedness, which leads to having less parking space and such. The word over crowdedness was mentioned by three interviewees in total. The final keyword that was mentioned often was the concern in the basic services and maintaining the current level as it was expected that it might drop due to the decrease in funding. There were no surprises whatsoever and the answers were sort of expected.

The last question of the current state of the national parks was what the main values in the managing of the parks are and also in the using of the parks. The most common word used was nature values when it came to the managing of the parks, but also in the use. However, preservation values were the second most used word in terms of management. Financial values were mentioned as well in terms of the use, but also in management as well which was concerning for the interviewees. P3 talks about how the main value is the nature itself and how it becomes first and then the humans. P3 talks about how the staff does their job not money on their mind but rather with love towards nature and the feeling of doing something significant and meaningful is the driver in doing the job.

5.2 Fees in national parks

In the interview process after the questions regarding the current state of the national parks it was time to move on the questions regarding fees in the national parks. However, at this point it was not asked the hypothetical questions yet but rather, what was their view about the fee usage at the moment in the national parks and their general opinion about the fees in general. These opinions were interesting in a sense that it was quite predictable at that point what the interviewees would say moving on to the hypothetical questions.

The first question was what fees are currently in use in the Finnish national parks regarding entry fees, user fees etc. and was there anything that would be under planning at the moment. This was rather factual information, which I was also aware of meaning, the entry is always free of charge, except there might some specific arrangements if a company or a group of a larger size would enter a national park. This would require more detailed information regarding the situation. This practice of free entry is rather common globally even though the visits have decreased in the western countries in general. However, this does not have relations to willingness to pay in terms of national parks (Lindberg 2007; Munoz-Pina & et al., 2008; Walls, 2022, p. 586-587; Ansson, 1998, p. 9). In terms of user fees, the practice is also uncommon depending on the context, however. Metsähallitus does not collect user fees in cross-country skiing or biking etc. There are other stakeholders that collect fees that are often local businesses that rent kayaks, bikes or other equipment for use in national parks. In nature centers it is possible to buy maps or other similar products, but in general the operations of Metsähallitus are not based on business or external income but on the funding of the state. In terms of voluntary fees, there is not a possibility for that even though such practice is or has been planned to be conducted. It is still not likely to happen according to the interviewees. Interestingly, some participants were not aware of this, but knew that personal donations were able to be done at the moment privately, however. The only mandatory user fee was considered to be the reservation of a hut that is different from other huts maintained by Metsähallitus in a sense that they are only available for reserved customers that require payments. Other huts are free of charge but lack the privacy which can be attained with the reservation hut.

Next, it was asked what the interviewees general opinion on fees in the national parks was. The answers were rather polarized with some exceptions being in some cases to be in the middle sort of. It was still clear that some were on the side of the current practice with no changes whatsoever, and other rooted for the voluntary entry fee, and some were supporting a mandatory entry fee. Thus, it is

partially a goal of this study to find out which of the three practices would be the most suitable one in terms of overall satisfaction with attention to visitors, constitutions and funding.

When looking at the content of the answers the opinions were quite varying even though some sort of consensus was able to be seen. Knowing what the study was about or predicting where the questions were going to go, might have influenced as the interviewees started their answers with what they believed what was going to happen and what they preferred, which was understandable. However, when looking at the answers, it was clear that no one was supporting the mandatory fee. Actually, the content of use of words was rather negative towards this idea and it was even rarely mentioned. The most common keywords in this context were voluntary fee and it was mentioned the most. Half were against the fees and were supporting the current practice based on the everyman's rights, the basic rights of Finnish people. The idea was so disturbing if it was to change that the use of words was denying, disbelieved and not waiting to discuss about it and forget it.

However, the voluntary fee was not denied, and it was often said that the current practice is very something to be started to change towards mandatory as it would be too big of a change. The voluntary fee was considered as acceptable and only P5 was willing to take it further to mandatory if it would be to function decently. Some were sort of on the same path but were seemingly afraid or not able to mention it. The voluntary fee was still accepted based on the voluntary practice itself, which does not require anything. It was emphasized that it should not be forced but only mentioned about in the context of what one will have with it and how it helps. The ones rooting for voluntary also said like P1 and P2 that they just cannot see it happening as it was not possible. The mandatory fee was not possible based on the resource problem that would become reality in the surveillance of it, but based on the content it was denied due to ideological reasons. This could be seen in correlation with if the interviewees were to be against the current government of Finland and praising the previous one due to the increases in funding of Metsähallitus.

This content showed that the current practice is still highly supported and would be a major change if it would be to change. This is why, at this point the current practice is on the top based on the ideology, fear of change, fundamentals of Finnish way of life and scarcity of resources. This has also something to do with the previous research on willingness to pay which is largely studied globally. Most often the global research consensus is that more highly educated people are more willing to pay for voluntary and mandatory entry fees than less educated. It is not based on income

even though often highly educated tend to have more income (See e.g Bal & et al., 2014; Santhakumar, 2009; Wolch, Wilson & Fehrenbach, 2005, p. 4-5).

After this, it was asked if the mandatory entry fee would be to happen hypothetically, what would be in the interviewee's opinion a sufficient price for the entry. Following this was asked what is the general opinion of the interviewees about user fees. However, in some cases these were not asked if the interviewee had answered something about the user fees before. Also, in some cases it was rather hard to get an answer to the hypothesis on mandatory entry fees as some thought that it would not be even possible. More specifically this question included what price would be sufficient enough that the visitors would pay it and travel there and that would cover the costs enough.

For many it was hard to imagine this sort of scenario and that could be seen in the content of the research data. For instance, one of the interviewees considered that it already sounds awful and unpleasant and from there the interview proceeded with the person talking about it in a sense that it would be better that it would be in the form of voluntary fee. This way the person displayed the common use of words and content when discussing this scenario, which was rather hesitant and disbelieved – as if it was not considered possible or was hoped to be as such. Another person was agreeing with this also sharing that the amount of resistance would be so immense that it would not happen, whilst the number of visitors to be dropped. However, P3 was not resisting on the idea even though when considering previous answers, it was predicted that P3 would not support that. However, being able to detach from personal preferences and ideology, P3 considered 5€ to be a sufficient price for entering a national park in Lapland. At the same time such price would contribute to the financial problems easily solving them if the number of visitors would be the same. This is due to the big number of visitors in national parks in Lapland. However, according to P3 it would not be so efficient elsewhere due to the lower number of visitors.

Interestingly, when prior this question all the interviewees denied supporting mandatory fee P4 and P5 considered 10 euros to be a sufficient price for entering. However, P8 and P6 were considering 2€ to a reasonable price when P7 denied the idea completely. With this contribution the interviewees displayed ability to detach from personal ideologies and consider the requested scenario without fearing to be to happen in most cases. This was fortunate even though it was rather obvious that every possible source of income would be beneficial. But the magnitude of the help of it is so immense that it makes wonder, why it is not used if it would be to help so much.

The last question of the second part was as how important the current and previous governments of Finland have seen the national parks of Finland. This was directly related to the funding as when the government sees them as important, then more funding can be expected. However, this was not asked if some answered the question already and when it was rather obvious when some interviewees had discussed the topic in advance without asking about it. This was also the advantage of using semi-structured interviews as data collection methods. Thus, based on the previous answers as well, it was rather clear that all the previous governments were more generous towards Metsähallitus and the national parks. Especially the previous government of prime minister Sanna Marin was praised for generous funding, which was evident in the establishment of the national parks of Salla in Lapland and Hossa in Kainuu region. However, other governments were not mentioned except for the current one of prime minister Petteri Orpo, which was critiqued in most cases for cutting of the funds of Metsähallitus.

This was understandable as the staff and resource problems are a direct issue caused when the funding drops dramatically – even to a level that is unprecedented. For instance, P6 critiqued the whole line of procedure in general of the prime minister Petteri Orpo and the whole government that is involved with this. It was hard for the interviewees to accept the very strict line of cuts in the state budget that is the line that the prime minister has taken with the government. This can be seen at the moment with more and more saving procedures taking place in many instances throughout the state budget that has been critiqued heavily. Thus, it is evident that based on the content, Metsähallitus is not in a state of emergency. However, based on the content no one knows what will happen as the amount of funding is seemingly historically low, which means that the ability of adaptation of Metsähallitus will be tested during the next three years when the current government holds the power of the use of state budget and tax money of Finnish people.

The atmosphere now is that Metsähallitus tries to survive and hope that the next government increases their funding once again. This is what they expect if the parties of the previous government gain power again. Some sort of understanding is shown, but especially P6 and P8 showed lack of understanding and acceptance towards this. As much is not possible to be done expect for strikes or such procedures, Metsähallitus has to accept the situation and move on and attempt to survive. With this, it was next time to move on to the final theme of the interview: the hypothetical effects of fees in national parks, which was the main topic of the interviews.

5.3 Hypothetical effects of fees in national parks

The first two questions of the last theme included, depending on the context and the situation of the interview, at most what the interviewees believed what was going to happen if mandatory entry- and user fees were to happen in general. Following this, if necessary, it was asked what would happen to the visitors; would the number of visitors drop and would it lead to a lot of resistance – and would there be differences between domestic and foreign visitors in terms of the interpretation of this. The first part was rather complicated when it included so many questions, but it was meant to lead the interviewees to imagine this scenario and they did a good job eventually.

P1 mentioned resistance of visitors would be evident and also violations as consequences due to the basic rights of the Finns. This is the general consequence according to P1. However, in the most popular national parks and routes would be perhaps functional according to P1 based on the limiting factor to cease over crowdedness. Also, foreigners are often amazed by the free entry and services.

P2 on the other hand believed that it would lead to dramatic drops in the number of visitors partly based on the current economic situation which is rather negative in Finland. However, even though P2 was resisting the idea, P2 did not completely turn down this scenario despite stating that it would never happen. The content refers to disbelief and supports the current system like in the case of P1, whilst the voluntary fee has some possibilities, when the mandatory is not seen possible so far; even when it is a common practice elsewhere with state funding support as well (Taylor & et al., 2009; James, 1999, p. 20; Ostergren & et al., 2003; Järviluoma & et al., 2001). P3 believes that such scenario leads to inequality when looking at different people in different socio-economic positions. However, P3 believes that foreign visitors would take it lightly, when the domestic would not. This would lead to Finns planning their trip to national parks looking at the price of the fee choosing their destination partly based on that. However, P3 does not believe on this to happen either at all. Thus disbelief, inequality and foreign acceptance are the most relevant content in this topic in terms of P3.

P4 states a new perspective to the discussion: P4 thinks that the mandatory fee would lead to decrease of visitors which would be a positive effect as the nature would have time to preserve and prosper when it is not consumed as much according to P4. P4 bases this idea on Covid-19 era when this could be seen concretely for the first time ever. This is not in accordance with P4's previous statements, but also considers the scenario with disbelief as the surveillance would be difficult as

resources for it would be hard to gain. This would lead to violations permanently, which was mentioned often before as well. One interesting statement was also made by one of the interviewees regarding the effects of having a mandatory entry fee:

“Based on my personal view, the funding of the national parks would be stable year after year”

P5 had been the most supportive so far towards the payments based on the content of P5’s answers. P5 still mentions that some resistance would occur; however, it would lead to adaptation after a while as long as the price is comprehensible like 5€. It should begin with the voluntary practice however or with 2€ entry fee at the beginning so it would not feel that bad for the visitors. P5 also believes that the Finns would need more adaptation for this new practice while the foreigners would not have any issues with the payments. Even though the resource challenge in collecting the fees is recognized by P5, P5 in contrary to other so far, believes that people would be honest in the case and pay the prices accordingly.

P6 so far was the most resistant towards any other practices which is why it was difficult to ask the questions about the last theme. It was necessary to explain why this must be asked, and eventually P6 was willing to respond with integrity. At first P6 mentions the resource demand that it requires to collect the fees and how it is a difficult task to implement. Secondly, P6 finds it ridiculous in Finnish national parks to charge money from folks to enter nature. The whole idea is so distant that disbelief is being reflected in the content heavily. Interestingly, P6 talks about how new unofficial parking spots, trails and sites would being established by visitors that violate the rules when trying not having to pay any fees. This would lead to disturbances for the nature and some locals as well.

“I would not support mandatory entry fee, because I think that it is a benefit to our society, that people have free and easy access to nature for the reasons, that it leads to better overall health of the people and thus, there would be fewer healthcare costs.”

P7 had similar mentioning’s – however, P7 thinks that the fees would put people in various socio-economic positions to an unfavorable situation when only the people with better income would have the privilege to enter. It would in Finnish people begin a very resistant discussion. Also, the fact that it would limit some people going would be a positive thing but in most cases not. P7 thinks as well that some folks would not go to more distant national parks especially if the price is higher

than the more nearer one. So basically, for only financial reasons people would begin to favor the local national parks to the ones that are more far away.

With P8, P8 believes in polarization and inequality to prosper when only the people in higher socio-economic positions would have the privilege to enter. As P8 was also rather resistant towards the idea, it was difficult to discuss this topic, but luckily P8 mentioned also that the demand of the quality of services would be much higher than before, putting more pressure on the management and maintenance.

As the third and fourth questions related to the theme were should the mandatory fee be tested and how it functions and then make it a permanent option and would the results on the use of voluntary fee have any implications for the future use of mandatory fee. The mutual consensus based on the content was that if it would become mandatory it should be tested as voluntary at first and if it would fail, then mandatory fee should be forgotten at last. However, mostly this scenario was not even close to happening according to the interviewees. Even though the voluntary fee is under planning process apparently it was not mentioned. These questions were mostly related to the previous questions and did not bring much new critical information.

As the last questions were: if the price you would use for an entry fee would be paid and number of visitors would be the same as now, how much would it help the financial situation of Metsähallitus; would it be a permanent aid or temporary. Secondly, where these additional finances would be directed at. Lastly, what would you propose to be the price of mandatory fee, and how do you think people would spend approximately if the voluntary fee would be in use. The common consensus for the financial situation was that the help would be tremendous especially in the places where the number of visitors is higher like in Lapland. For instance, as P3 describes 5€ for every visit per person in a national park is such a help that it would almost solve all the financial problems if not all of them. However, it is not dared to imagine as the disbelief for such practice is so high. When discussing about where these finances would be directed at, the answers were related to the fixing of the repair debt, improvement of camping spots, investing in data management, improvement of services in general and staff resources. When it came to the proposed mandatory fee, most were not able to say such price, but was mostly at 5-10€. The voluntary prices were expected to be somewhere between 2-15€.

6 Discussion and main findings

The results of the study show that the content of the research data is in favor of the current practice of free entry. However, some hope is given for the voluntary fee, but not for mandatory fee. This conclusion is based on the data that implicates disbelief for such change that is heavily in contradiction on the basic everyman's rights of Finnish people, which is an ideology that is such a fundamental force that drives the way of thinking actions of all the workers and people in Finnish society that, at least during these times, it seems very unlikely – if not even impossible for mandatory fee to happen. The values of nature preservation and especially to have unrestricted access to nature is so deep in the traditions of the Finns, that it cannot be disturbed. Thus, the findings indicate the continuation of the current practice, but the voluntary fee can be attempted if done in a respectful and lawful way. Despite the fact that the fees would solve almost every issue financially, it is not wanted as the money or business are not the words that should ever be related to the nature preservation and access not matter what.

The main research question of the study was: What is expected to happen if Finnish national parks would start to charge entry fees for entering a national park. To answer the main question of the study, it is evident that, based on the content analysis of the study, resistance and decrease of domestic visitors would become reality. Also, the inequality would become reality as well when people in better socio-economic positions would become the more common group present in the national parks. Also, some implications on choosing not to go too far for a national park visit would be seen. Polarization is also something that would be expected in the opposite socio-economic groups as well. While the finances of Metsähallitus would be better than ever, the reputation might have suffered among domestic visitors. Foreign tourists are not expected to react in any way. However, this scenario is very unlikely, if not even impossible. The goal of the study was to figure out a hypothesis that is as justified as possible based on the expert's view. Thus, such scenario will not be seen in any time.

The sub-questions were: 1. Why the current practice is being used and what are the positive and negative effects of it? 2. What kind of effects such change would cause in funding, visitors, and in the nature and management of the parks? 3. What kind of role specific user fees have and would have in these themes? The purpose of the study was to gain understanding on the current practice of managing the national parks in Finland and to figure out if it would be reasonable and justified to start charging fees from visitors to enter a national park/protected area in Finland.

To answer the first sub-question, it is evident, when considering the main research question of the study, that the practice is being used, because of the ideological reasons that underly so very deeply in the minds of the Finns. It is everyone's right no matter, the age, sex, nationality, gender or socio-economic status or even folks with physical restrictions. This is a value that is based on the value of equality, which is something that is deeply rooted in the fundamentals of Finnish society. This possibility and value are protected at any cost, and it is something that they are proud of. The positive effects of it are that literally everyone has access to the nature easily, which then promotes health and well-being – but also allows people to educate themselves about nature and how important it is. The negative side of it is that as little income is being gained, as the funding is solely based on the state funding, which is now lower than ever for Metsähallitus. With even little entry fees financial problems could be solved, but now as the governments hold the power, the Finnish voters choose every four years who gains the power over the national parks funding basically.

For the second question, the change if entry fees were to happen, the funding issues would be solved as long as the number of visitors would not drop dramatically; this is heavily based on the prices. However, violations of rules would be expected and the resources for collecting fees would be an everlasting problem. As concluded before, domestic visitors would drop, especially people from lower socio-economic groups. Interestingly, the nature would be preserved better as there might be less people on the trails and the managing would become easier when there would be more money to fix the repair-debt. Lastly, when it comes to the user fees that display all the other fees for the services existing inside the national parks, they would not play as important role as entry fees. The entry fee is the most limiting factor, and as some user fees are in use already, those do not play a big role in terms of funding or in the numbers of visitors.

The purpose of the study was to find out would it be reasonable to start collecting entry fees or any fees in the Finnish national parks – or even justified. With qualitative research methods as predictive future research, the study was carried out collecting the research data from 8 experts that operate in the northern Finland in Lapland, Kainuu and northern Ostrobothnia with semi-structured interviews focusing on three main topics: current state of the national parks, fees in national parks and hypothetical effects of the fees. With social constructivism as an underlying paradigm guiding the study and practice theory as well and looking at the previous research, suggestions for the future would be attempted to be made as well to find out what is the best practice to be used in the Finnish national parks in terms of fees: free entry (current practice), voluntary fees or mandatory fees. As

the previous research indicates that the mandatory fee would be essential in solving the funding issue, which is why it is popular practice globally and would work in Finland as well in that sense. However, as the findings indicate, even when the solving effect is detected by the experts as well, it would not work out nor happen either due to the ideological reasons that underly in the values of Finnish people. Thus, it must be suggested that the current practice is to be continued with. The voluntary fee can involve as well after it has been attempted as long as it follows the Finnish law concerning money collection and is done respectfully without pressuring and also explaining where this voluntary support is being directed at. Hence, it can be tested but if it is not to be work out in terms of law and other functions, it should be forgotten as well.

As Witt (2019) states how globally national parks have funding issues, the use of mandatory entry fees and user fees is almost necessary and thus, justified and reasonable to provide effective management, conservation, labor and infrastructure for the national parks and protected areas (Witt, 2019). This is heavily part of the reason why this study was conducted and due to the current policy of the year before elected new Finnish government, this question has been brought up a little bit by Kallunki (2023) for instance in the news. I was also believing that such practice would be useful, and it would be almost unreasonable to not do that. Even as the interviewed experts recognized this as well, and sort of supported it in some sense, but not all of them. In the analysis process of the study, it was clear that the content of the research data was expressed differently by every different interviewee but trying to imply the same consensus all along. This consensus of disbelief towards having mandatory fee was so high that it is expected to not ever happen. It is very interesting to analyze and figure out why it is such a barrier in the management of these parks even when it is clear that it would solve all the financial problems immediately. However, perhaps it should not be seen as a negative, but rather something to be proud of. If there are certain fundamentals, it seems that they must hold on to no matter what, which is why it can be proceeded with for as long as possible. That is something to be proud of, and as all the other countries may start to charge these fees, maybe this free entry practice is something that Finland can market its national parks with – at least it cannot be seen in a negative perspective by the tourists in any situation. This also proves how the power of ideology, and values should not be underestimated. This ideology and values show deeply equality and respect towards nature is rooted in Finnish mentality; that might be the one of the reasons why Finland is often chosen to be the happiest country in the world.

7 Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to gain understanding on the current practice of managing the national parks in Finland and to figure out if it would be reasonable and justified to start charging fees from visitors to enter a national park/protected area in Finland. With qualitative approach the study was carried out as predictive future research. Using content analysis and semi-structured interviews as research methods and practice theory and previous research on national park funding, use and willingness to pay for entry and user fees in national parks as theoretical background, 8 experts were interviewed to collect the research data to answer the research questions. It was found out that the current practice is the practice to be continued with even though the data shows implications on the functioning and reasoning of using mandatory fees and voluntary fees as additional sources of funding. However, this practice should not be used due to the ideological reasons that it represents as it is against the Finnish ideology, mindset and basic rights of every human being. Thus, access to nature should not be mixed with business or money – even in the toughest of times as it is sacred place of healing and well-being that everyone should have access to despite the socio-economic position of one.

With social constructivism as the underlying social paradigm, three main practices were recognized to be suggested for the future practice of Finnish national parks in terms of entry and funding. Practice of free entry was the current practice and the practice to be proceeded with. Voluntary fee can be utilized if done with lawful measures. Practice of mandatory fees cannot be used in Finland based on the main findings of the study that implicate major decrease in domestic visitors putting them in unequal position based on their socio-economic status. The user fees do not have a major contribution at the moment to the funding issues nor they would contribute if added or increased the prices. However, adding a mandatory entry fee of 5-10 euros per visit would allow great benefits to the financial situation of managing the parks. However, due to the ideological barriers such practice is and should not be conducted. Foreign visitors would allow such change but domestic would begin to resist and cease to enter these parks, perhaps leading to negative health effects.

The study was carried out during an interesting time and a rather difficult time when it comes to the interviewees. As the funding decreases and organizational changes underway, that I was not aware of until mentioned, I believe it was difficult for the participants to talk about this topic. Thus, I respect the interviewees for sharing their opinions and expertise. The study could have been done in a longer time-period as it was done in a rather short timeline, which affected the success of doing

the analysis of the research data methodologically correct manner. Other than that, major changes or difficulties were not encountered, and the study was successful and finished well in that sense.

Future research is needed in Nordic countries on similar issues and the effects of voluntary fees and its possible functioning and if people in other Nordic countries would react similarly as Finns do.

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Appendix 1. Letter of consent and interview questions in English

Dear recipient,

My name is Elias Rossinen. I am Master student at University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland under the supervision of Professor Outi Rantala. You are invited to participate in my master thesis study entitled Descriptive case study on adding entry fees to the national parks in Finnish Lapland: A future oriented approach. The purpose of the study is to understand what is expected to happen if entry fees and user fees would become mandatory practice in Finnish national parks in the context of Finnish Lapland. The result of the study will be published as part of my master thesis. The thesis is conducted as part of the master's degree Programme in Northern Tourism.

By signing this letter, you give consent to use the interview material confidentially and exclusively for research purposes. The research follows the principles for responsible conduct of research dictated by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research. The data will be handled anonymously. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw your permission even after signing this document, by informing the below mentioned contact person.

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor if you would need further information regarding the study and the use of the research data.

Sincerely, Elias Rossinen

Elias Rossinen
Noto Master student

I give consent to use the interview as data for the purpose mentioned above.

Signature

Date

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Name and title in your organization.
2. How long have you worked in your organization?

Part 1. Current situation.

1. What is your opinion on the current state of Finnish national parks?
2. Is there something you would improve when it comes to the management of the parks and protected areas?
3. How do you see the current funding situation of Metsähallitus?
4. What kind of feedback have you received?
5. How their experience could be improved?
6. How the funding practices should be developed?
7. What are the values driving the management and use of the parks?

Part 2. Fees

1. What fees are in use currently and are there any underway?
2. What is your general opinion on fees in national parks?
3. What would be a proper amount that is payable but would cover the necessary costs?
4. What is the situation with particular user fees, how much do they help?
5. How does the government seem to consider the importance of national parks?

Part 3. The effects

1. What do you think would happen if the mandatory fee would be in use; what are the general effects of it?
2. What happens to the visitors, does the volume drop and/or do they complain about it or understand?
3. Would it be worth it to try such practice or after the voluntary entry fee has showed some evidence?
4. If imagined that the visitor volume stays the same with entry fees, with your proposed entry fee, how much it would help the management of the parks and the financial situation of Metsähallitus – is it a solution or just a temporary aid?
5. Where this additional income would be directed at?
6. In your opinion, what would be a good price for an entry fee and how much people would approximately pay if a voluntary fee would be in use?

Appendix 2. Letter of consent and interview questions in Finnish

TUTKIMUKSEEN OSALLISTUVAN SUOSTUMUS

Olen Elias Rossinen ja olen maisteriopiskelija Lapin yliopistossa Rovaniemellä. Kutsun sinut osallistumaan pro-gradututkielmaani, jonka tarkoituksena on tutkia tulevaisuusorientoituneesti hypoteesia, jossa Suomen kansallispuistoissa olisi käytössä pakolliset pääsymaksut sekä tiettyjä käyttömaksuja. Työstän pro-gradututkielmaani professori Outi Rantalalan ohjauksessa.

Tutkimuksen tulokset julkaistaan osana maisterintutkielmaani. Tutkielma tehdään osana maisteriohjelmää Northern Tourism.

Allekirjoittamalla tämän suostumuksen, annat suostumuksesi käyttää haastatteluaineistoa luottamuksellisesti ja yksinomaan tutkimustarkoituksiin. Tutkimus noudattaa Tutkimuseettisen Neuvottelukunnan määrittelemiä vastuullisen tutkimuksen periaatteita. Tiedot käsitellään anonyymisti. Osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista, ja voit peruuttaa suostumuksesi myös tämän asiakirjan allekirjoittamisen jälkeen ilmoittamalla alla mainitulle yhteyshenkilölle.

Ole hyvä ja ota yhteyttä minuun tai ohjaajaani, jos tarvitset lisätietoja tutkimuksesta ja tutkimusaineiston käytöstä.

Ystävällisin terveisin,

Elias Rossinen

Matkailututkimuksen maisteriopiskelija

Annan suostumukseni haastattelun käyttöön yllä mainitussa tarkoituksessa.

Allekirjoitus

Päivämäärä

Nimenselvennys

AVAUSKYSYMYKSET

1. Nimesi ja tehtävänimikkeesi? Voitko kertoa tehtävistäsi ja vastuualueistasi?
2. Kuinka kauan olet työskennellyt organisaatiossasi?

Teema 1. Nykytila

1. Millaiseksi kuvailisit Suomen kansallispuistojen nykytilaa?
2. Mitä parantaisit kansallispuistojen ja suojelualueiden hoitamisessa ja ylläpidossa/johtamisessa?
3. Miten näet kansallispuistojen nykyisen rahoituksen? Millaista kehitystä siinä on ollut?
4. Millaista palautetta olette saaneet kävijöiltä?
5. Miten kävijöiden kävijäkokemusta saisi parannettua?
6. Miten nykyistä rahoitusmallia pitäisi mielestäsi kehittää?
7. Millaiset arvot ohjaavat hoitoa ja käyttöä ja miten ne näkyvät nykytilassa?

Teema 2. Maksut

1. Millaisia maksuja on käytössä nyt ja mitä on suunnitteilla?
2. Mitä mieltä olet maksuista yleisesti, pääsy, käyttömaksut vapaaehtoiset yms?
3. Millainen pääsymaksu olisi sellainen, että sen ihmiset mielestäsi maksaisivat ja jolla saataisiin katettua kuluja riittäväällä tasolla?
4. Mitä ajattelet käyttömaksuista, olisiko niistä apua rahoituksessa ja maksettaisiinko niitä? Onko niitä jo käytössä?
5. Kuinka tärkeinä nykyhallitus ja edelliset hallitukset ovat pitäneet kansallispuistoja ja suojelualueita.

Teema 3. Hypoteettiset vaikutukset

1. Mitä uskot yleisesti tapahtuvan, jos pääsymaksut otetaan käyttöön?
2. Mitä kävijöille tapahtuisi, laskisivatko määrät ja valittaisivatko ihmiset paljon? Miten kotimaiset ja ulkomaiset eroaisivat toisistaan tässä? Ovatko pakolliset maksut jo osin käytössä?
3. Olisiko pääsymaksukäytännön kokeilu lyhyesti järkevää vai tulisiko siitä tehdä heti pysyvää. Olisiko vapaaehtoisen maksun kokeilun tuloksilla vaikutusta siihen miten pakollisen maksun kanssa toimittaisiin?
4. Jos esittämälläsi pääsymaksulla kävijämäärä pysyisi samana, kuinka paljon se auttaisi puistojen hoitoa sekä Metsähallituksen taloudellista tilannetta? Olisiko se pysyvä ratkaisu vai väliaikainen?
5. Mihin tämä saatu raha ohjattaisiin, olisiko hyvä olla jokin tietty kohde mihin nämä tulot ohjattaisiin?
6. Mitä arvelet mikä olisi hyvä hinta pääsymaksulle ja paljonko keskimäärin maksettaisiin, jos käytössä olisi vapaaehtoinen maksu?