



# The use of local culture in regional development in Southwest-Finland archipelago

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# Culture in regional development



- Regional councils are the responsible authorities in regional development
  - Regional program, regional plan
- EU regional and structural funds are used for developing economy and living conditions
- **Local culture** is considered an important aspect in this development work
- Concerns also the Southwest-Finland archipelago



# What is culture?

## Old definition

- Culture is a certain static, collective whole, which is connected to an area or region or to a group of people
- Culture has an own unique character, its own essence
- A part of it is reification, according to which certain tangible and intangible cultural phenomena are seen as natural parts of certain culture
- In a concrete way culture is seen as common products: artefacts, buildings, cultural landscapes, means of livelihood, meanings and symbols, oral tradition, customs and habits, world views etc.

# What is culture?

## New definition



- Culture is a continuously changing and heterogeneous interaction process
- The definition is based on empirical facts, which demonstrate variation, change and heterogeneity in different areas or regions and among different groups of people
- The definition is based on empirical facts, which demonstrate similarities between different areas or regions and between different groups of people
- In a concrete way culture is seen as a process of interaction between different individuals and as changing and varying cultural elements in this process
  - These cultural elements are: artefacts, buildings, cultural landscapes, means of livelihood, meanings and symbols, oral tradition, customs and habits, world views etc.

# Fredrik Barth's analytical model

## Applied to the analysis of the use of culture in regional development



- **Macro level: State, EU**
  - Local culture is seen as a tool in development work
  - Local culture is usually seen according to the old definition of culture: cultural constructions
- **Middle level: Local organisations**
  - Local culture is used as a tool in development work
  - Local culture is usually seen according to the old definition of culture: cultural constructions
- **Micro level: Individuals**
  - Everyday life
  - Local culture is seen according to the new definition of culture: process of interaction between different individuals
- All these levels are parts of the whole of culture and in interaction with each other  
-> In culture both the process of interaction between individuals and organised cultural constructions are in interaction



# Southwest Finland archipelago today



- An idyllic archipelago milieu with over 22 000 islands in a sea area of 10 000 km<sup>2</sup>
  - In inner archipelago wide and fertile islands, suitable for agriculture
  - 75 % of the islands have less than one hectare of surface area, and many are quite barren
  - 18 small municipalities, population ca 20 000 on islands
- The living conditions of archipelago has changed in the course of modernisation process
  - Former sources of livelihood, mainly agriculture and fishing, are not profitable any more, for example service sector has replaced them and tourism is seen promising
  - During the 20th century, population has been decreasing

# Regional development in archipelago



- Regional Councils, municipalities, subregions and other organised areas should improve economic and living conditions in archipelago
- In this work they are geared to make use, among others, of their regional distinctiveness and culture
  - Every area needs to be special, and especially different from its neighbours
  - Every area should formulate an authentic local identity/brand, which should also materialise as products and services
  - Areas strive to get economic support from the European Union and national funds
  - In this whole process they engage in reciprocal competition for the same resources

# Archipelago in everyday life



## - important elements

- Familiar people living in the neighborhood and close interaction with them
- Nature and environment with islands and the sea
- Long family history on an ancestral farm can tie someone to his/her home place
- But, descriptions of these vary from individual to individual
  - A fisherwoman's dream, experience of an own space in the nature:
    - A trip with her mother to a distant, small island with bottle of vodka with them. To sit in peace and silence, in sunshine and sheltered from the wind in familiar company are essential elements in this experience.





# Archipelago in everyday life

- The central and unifying factor in all the descriptions about important traits in the own home area is the individual and intimate relationship with ones own surroundings, the people and the nature
- There are unifying traits in these relationships, but it is not possible to consider them as similar
- In some cases the important matters highlighted by different individuals are even contradictory
- In these descriptions it is not possible to find the official archipelago, which is present for instance in tourist brochures
- This is a private archipelago, where people live their own lives with each other

# Archipelago in regional development

## - a nostalgic archipelago

- In a project TuMa one subregion in archipelago concentrated on development of tourist industry
- Unique nature, living local culture with traits of traditional livelihoods, habits and customs, and a landscape with village milieus and traditional small red houses are seen as resources
- As weakness is pointed out the impoverishing of archipelago culture, and a wish is stated that the area should be populated by people, who should among other things fish and keep some farm animals



# Archipelago in regional development

## - a modern high quality product



- Interreg project Skärgårdssmak aims at creating a new high quality brand of archipelago, like there exists a concept of the Alpine area
- In practice the target is to establish a chain of restaurants, which reach international standard, and deserve a special Skärgårdssmak sign
- These restaurants will use local raw materials, whereupon the success of restaurants would benefit agriculture and fishing in the area
- Also local high quality handicraft products, made of local raw materials, are linked to the project
- The brand is neither based on traditional life in the area, nor the current everyday life in the area

*Da wundert es niemanden, daß die Ehre "Finnischer Koch des Jahres 1997" soeben von einem waschechten Schärenkoch errungen wurde, dem erst 21-jährigen Michael Björklund, der sich nun ebenfalls stark bei "Skärgårdssmak" engagiert, um seine Kunst an andere weiterzugeben.*



*Achten Sie auf dieses Zeichen:  
Es garantiert die weitestgehende Verwendung genuiner Rohstoffe aus der Schärenregion, die Anwendung traditioneller Rezepte und eine qualitativ hohe Kochkultur, die sich dem Streben nach ständiger Verbesserung verpflichtet hat.*

**Projekt Schären delikatessen**

# Tensions arise



- Between the everyday life in archipelago and constructions of archipelago used in regional development
  - People in archipelago don't want to live neither in museums nor in high quality brands
  - Culture is on the one hand very intimate and private and on the other hand highly collective and public
- Between different archipelago constructions
  - Cultural constructions are always arbitrary, they include and exclude elements of the life in whole, and they can be contradictory
- Between cultural symbols
  - Same symbols live both in everyday life and in constructions used in regional development, but they get different meanings in different contexts



# Regional development needs cultural understanding



- Cultural constructions and symbols are not at all irrelevant for people, neither in everyday life nor in regional development
- Cultural tensions can affect all of: creativity and conflicts, well-being and marginalisation
- Culturally sustainable development takes this into consideration
- Developers need cultural understanding of
  - how culture is functioning as a whole
  - which cultural elements, symbols and values live at different times and in different contexts



# More information



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