Greensettle
GREEN CITIES AND SETTLEMENTS

UNIVERSITY of OULU
OULUN YLIOPISTO

Sustainable Spatial Planning for Rural Regions

Experiences from Finland

NorTech Oulu

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Report for WP3: Roadmap for sustainable spatial development

This project is co-funded by the European Union, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Finland

ENPI CBC KARELIA

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1 Introduction

This report is a part of the Green cities and settlements (GREENSETTLE) -project. The project is financed from the Karelia ENPI CBC programme (which is co-funded by the European Union, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Finland). The objective of the GREENSETTLE-project is to encourage the development of green cities and settlements, especially in remote cross border areas of Finland and Russia. The aim of the green cities and settlements is to provide a pleasant living environment, protect natural and cultural resources as well as utilize the cultural heritage as a factor for development. In Finland the target regions are Oulu region (also known as Northern Ostrobothnia), Kainuu and North Karelia. In Russia the target area consists of the Republic of Karelia. Finnish target areas are as a source of best practice examples for the Republic of Karelia.

The aim of this report is to study sustainable spatial development and planning processes in rural areas. Attention is paid especially to the social and cultural aspects of the sustainability. One of the goals is to learn, how communities use participatory approaches to become a sustainable community. Special interest is laid thus on the tools that can be used to involve people in the development and planning of their community. This report is more of a theory-based study, because especially cases from the Russian side of the border were hard to find.

"Spatial" is not a simple term, but in geographic terms it widely includes the dimensions of space and distance. According to the Commission of the European Communities (CEC) (1997: 24) "*spatial planning* refers to the methods used largely by the public sector to influence the future distributions of activities in space".

Most of the people in developed countries live nowadays in urban areas. This is the case also in the Republic of Karelia, where only 23.6 % of the population (1st January 2009) live in rural areas. The people are packed to the cities and other urban like communities, and Petrozavodsk with a population close to 300 000 is the biggest one in the republic of Karelia is Petrozavodsk (Карелия официальная… 2013). In Kainuu, the share of rural population was 32 % of the total population in 2007 (Hätälä & Rusanen 2010) and in North Karelia and Oulu region the numbers are even smaller than in Kainuu. Though a majority of the inhabitants does not live in rural areas in any of the

target areas, sustainability issues are to be taken seriously in rural areas as well. Rural areas especially in the Republic of Karelia are also relatively underdeveloped in comparison to those of the Finnish target regions.

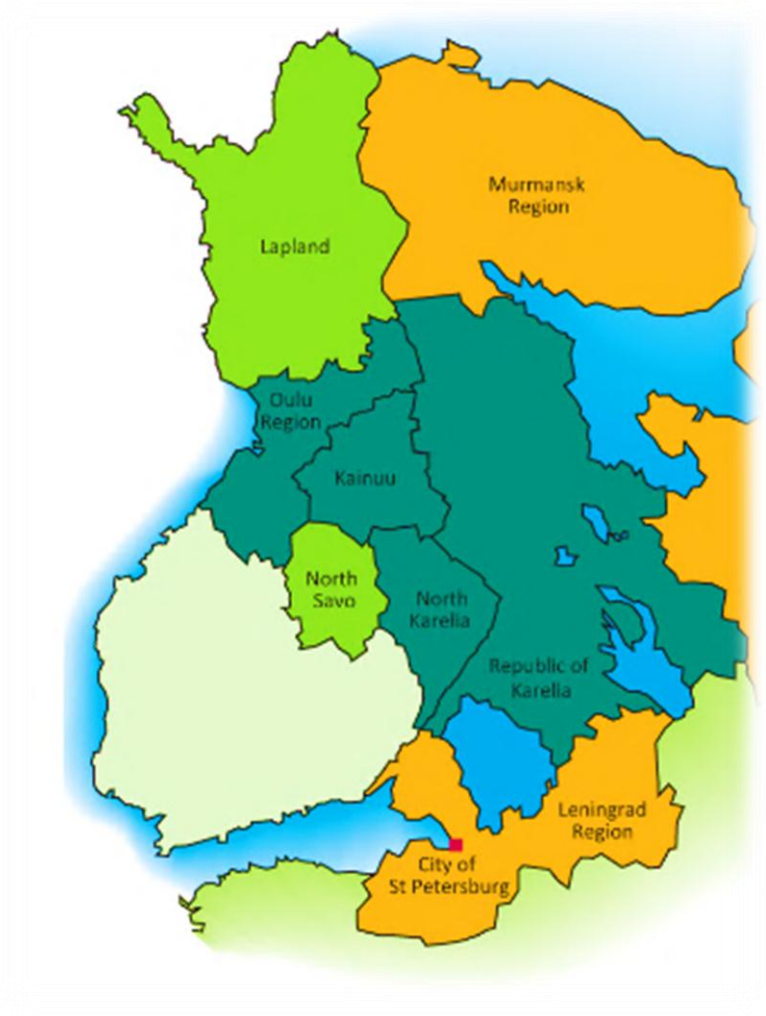

Figure 1. The target areas of the GREENSETTLE-project (depicted as dark green) (Programme area… 2013).

Several studies and reports have been already carried out in the GREENSETTLE -project, which have targeted natural environments and resources as well as technological issues from the point of view of their "greenness" and sustainability. However, according to Evans et al. (2011) social and cultural dimensions are a relevant part of sustainability as well. That is why there is an urge to view those issues also more from rural communities' viewpoints toward sustainability as well as

on sustainability of cultural heritage in rural areas.

Aforementioned issues will be observed particularly from a rural perspective. Eco-cities and sustainability in cities have been studied in recent years, but the rural areas have not received a lot of attention. The Nordic Council of Ministers has set the following targets to rural municipalities for the first few years of the 21st century: mobilization of more environmentally friendly agriculture and forestry, creation of new jobs and development of new cultural and other service options (Nordic Council of Ministers… 2001). Target areas of the GREENSETLLE-project include urban areas as well, but the main emphasis of this report is on the rural base.

There is still plenty to be done in order that the studied rural regions of the GREENSETTLE-project can become genuinely sustainable areas. In this report the theoretic base of sustainable spatial development in rural areas is studied with introduction of a couple of Finnish cases. The report provides information about good and bad practices from the field of sustainable development.

2 Sustainability and sustainable development

The concept of "sustainable development" was introduced in the Brundtland report *Our common future* in 1987 (see e.g. Varley et al. 2009: 2). James and Lahti (2004: 5-6) mention two global trends, which are strongly related to the idea of sustainability. The two trends are declining natural systems and rising population and consumption. As it seems that time is gradually running out when it comes to changing the course of these trends, sustainability has received more and more attention.

The idea of sustainability is complex and there are many definitions for the concept. According to the most common definition sustainable development includes the following three sectors: environmental, economic and social (James & Lahti 2004: 15-16). These aspects form also "three Es" of sustainability: **e**nvironmental resilience, **e**conomic vitality and social **e**quity (see e.g. Hempel 2009). The three sectors of sustainable development are interdependent. Sustainability has to be met in all the tree fields in order that sustainable development could be maximized to the best possible results (Elliot 2009: 118). Another common definition reminds us that our present-day actions have long-term results that will affect the future of our children and grandchildren. We should therefore protect and save resources for the future generations and think how we act at present (James & Lahti 2004: 15-16).

In this report cultural sustainability is seen as an important dimension of sustainability. In Figure 2, cultural sustainable development and social sustainability have been combined, because social and cultural aspects are somewhat overlapping. The illustration could be somewhat different too, depending on which aspects are emphasized and included under the term of sustainable development. In this figure social and cultural dimensions are seen as significant part of the sustainable development.

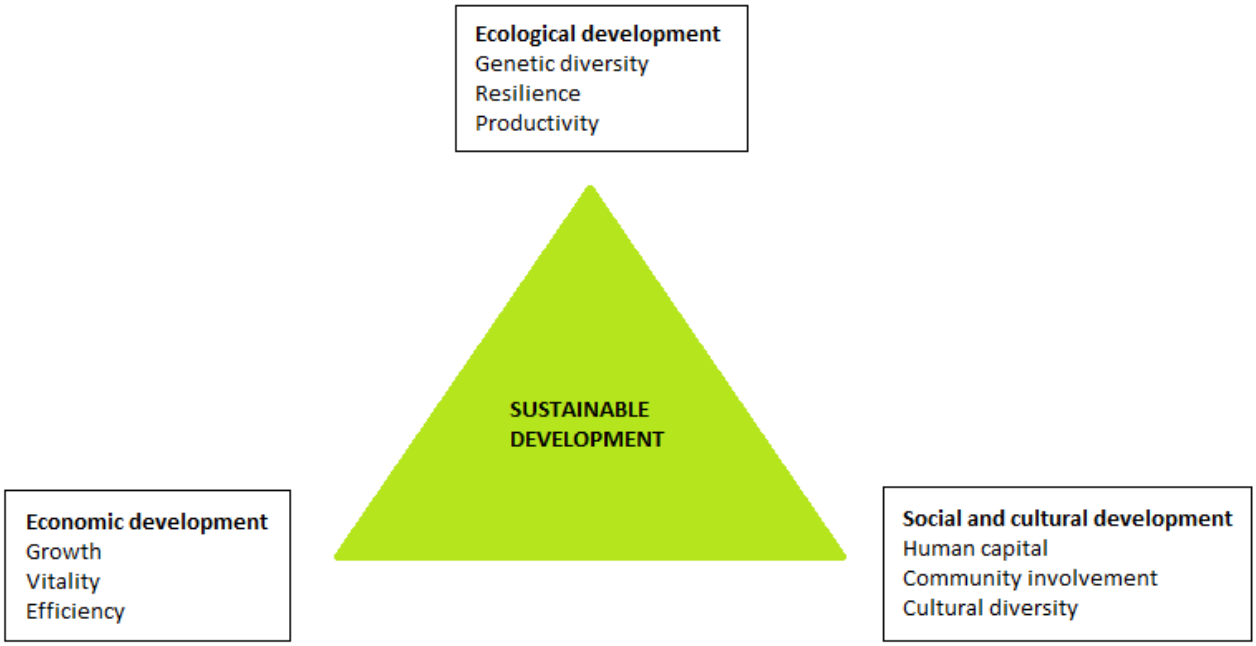

Figure 2. The objectives of sustainable development (modified from Elliot 2009: 119).

The report by World Commission on Culture and Development (World Commission on Culture and Development… 1995: 206-207) includes eight different aspects of sustainability, which clearly illustrate that sustainability is not just an environmental or an economic concern. The aspects are:

1. the maintenance, replacement and growth of physical capital assets
2. the maintenance of human capital
3. the maintenance of the physical environmental conditions for the constituents of well-being
4. resilience
5. the avoidance of burdening future generations with internal and external debts
6. fiscal, administrative and political sustainability
7. ability to empower citizens (of developing countries) to manage projects so that foreign experts can withdraw without jeopardizing their success
8. culture as a sustaining instrument and as an objective embracing development.

The Nordic Council of Ministers adopted the Declaration on a sustainable Nordic Region in November 1998. The Nordic countries and the self-governing areas of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland Islands were included in this Declaration. Also adjacent areas, such as North-

West Russia were taken into account in the objectives. That means that all the target areas of the GREENSETTLE-project were included in the Declaration. The long-term objectives for sustainable development in adjacent areas were – to mention some examples – to contribute towards exploitation of economic potential and promotion of sustainable growth, to contribute towards social equality, to reduce pollution, to improve nuclear security, and to promote sustainable development in Arctic communities (Nordic Council of Ministers… 2001).

When sustainability is brought to discussion, this often raises questions about "whose sustainability?" and "sustainable for whom?" is on the agenda. Stakeholders may have divergent opinions on what is sustainable and what is not. In these cases different interest groups must be brought together to discuss and to reach common understanding on, what is meant with "sustainable" and "unsustainable" in these cases (Varley et al. 2009: 1). Compromises might be needed from all the sides.

2.1 Social sustainability

As it was noted earlier, not only natural environment and natural resources are important aspects in the development of community sustainability. Social and cultural resources are also to be considered in the sustainability research. Scott et al. (2000: 443) describe social sustainability as "having a local, historically defined content which will include elements of livelihood, social participation, justice and equity". Social sustainability should be seen as an important part of the sustainable development, but a social system cannot be sustainable without vital economic and environmental sectors either. Poverty, for example, does not generally promote sustainability in any means and a poor economic situation is highly unlikely to promote social sustainable development either.

In social sustainable development, the main idea is to enable people to realize their potential and to build their self-confidence. That is, to improve the quality of life conditions at individual level. In addition, it is extremely important to empower communities to take care of their own environments and to participate in development activities happening in their areas. To become a more sustainable community a positive development in community participation is required (Evans et al. 2011).

Evans et al. (2011) introduced the ideas of social invention and social innovation. Social *invention* brings a change in the current social practice and it can be connected with new routines or a new common behavior. Social *innovation* is the concept used after the social invention has been taken into use. Referring to new ideas, concepts and strategies, social innovation can be closely connected with social sustainability and residents' participation in development and decision-making projects. Therefore social innovations are also concerned with the well-being of communities. Social innovations are more likely to occur in communities, where there is trust between members, where members are committed to their community and where the community is open.

Axelsson et al. (2013: 219) have put together four indicators of social sustainability criteria from different sources. The four indicators according to them are: democratic civil society, living environment, human development and equity. With the help of those four indicators it is possible to get an idea of the level of social sustainability in a certain community.

Another critical element of social sustainability is social capital. "*Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions... Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together*" (Bank, 1999). It is considered to be an important factor which can serve as indicator of how well society is able to organize communal actions if problems have occurred. A social capital approach gives theoretical background to understand the concept of societal mobilization for achieving sustainability, explaining the interaction between individuals in the process and the interdependence and integration of individuals and groups required for unity and continuity of collective action. Absence of such societal cohesion and effort makes it very difficult to implement any substantial change. Social capital usually higher in sustainable communities and societies and can exist on all level: local, regional and global. (Kusakabe 2012)

2.2 Cultural sustainability

Cultural environments and heritage should be taken into account in development processes as well. The cultural aspects and their preservation for the future must be given the acknowledgement and value that they require (Evans et al. 2011). As is stated in the Report of the

World Commission on Culture and Development (World Commission on Culture and Development… 1995: 15), “development divorced from its human or cultural context is growth without a soul”.

There are both material and immaterial cultural resources, but the value of the immaterial ones is too often forgotten. Tangible cultural heritage is preserved in museums and historic sites are conserved, but at the same time the intangible heritage of people’s minds may be lost forever. Also non-physical remains, such as local traditions and place names, are a part of the cultural heritage. Cultural landscapes – non-physical remains combined with the nature – are included in the cultural heritage as well (World Commission on Culture and Development… 1995: 176).

Governments cannot determine cultures, but they can influence on the direction the culture is being developed – or not developed at all (World Commission on Culture and Development… 1995). Vital cultural environment and heritage cannot be forgotten in decision-making and planning, because these are the building blocks, which increase the sense of community and strengthen the regional identity. They can also attract new people to the area and thus lead to population growth and promote tourism in the area (Ministry of employment and the economy… 2012).

The selected indicators of cultural sustainability criteria, which have been defined by Axelsson et al. (2013: 219) are the following:

- cultural vitality, diversity and conviviality
- social capital
- cultural landscape
- cultural heritage
- cultural access, participation, and consumption.

Salamon and MacTavish (2009: 423) define social capital – which is mentioned in the list above – as “the investment of participation people make in their communities, which creates social resources, such as trust and watchfulness, that have reciprocal effects on the community, its civic institutions, and cooperation that benefits them, and the greater good”.

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3 Rural development in Finland and in the Republic of Karelia

In the International Encyclopedia of Human Geography Woods (2009: 429) writes, that "rural areas have traditionally been identified with agriculture". Agriculture and rural areas were tied with each other for a long time. Attitudinally and politically they have been mixed for a long time even after agriculture became a vanishing part of the countryside (Uusitalo 2009: 245).

Woods (2009: 429) writes that the precise definition of "rural" is highly controversial, but the term "rural" can be said to describe non-urban geographical areas and their social and economic activities, lifestyles, cultures and etc. Today rural areas are often seen as the peripheries of a modern society. This kind of mindset, which automatically brands the rural areas as a "lost cause", does not acknowledge that there are rural areas, which can be competitive in the society. Usually, the concept of "rural area" is defined by the distinction which is made between the terms "rural area" and "urban area". In geographic research countryside (rural areas) and cities or towns (urban areas) are understood as spatial, regional or territorial concepts. That is – areas and regions are thought to be *in space*, part of the spatial and geographical dimension. However, the concepts of rural and urban can be approached from a different viewpoint as well. Countryside and the city can be understood as spiritual, symbolic or even metaphorical structures, which may include, for example, certain types of art, utility articles and attitudes toward life (Rosenqvist 2003: 3).

In all the target regions of the GREENSETTLE-project (Republic of Karelia, Kainuu, Oulu region and North Karelia) the share of the rural population of the total population has decreased during the last decades (Figure 3). After the collapse of the Soviet Union rural population grew for a while in the Republic of Karelia, but later the share of the rural population has diminished. The smallest rural population of the target areas is in Oulu region where only 18.7 % of the total population lived in rural areas in 2000.

The population statistics of the studied areas reveal that while the share of the rural population has decreased in all the regions (Figure 3), the total population in fact has grown in Oulu region. Elsewhere population has diminished – most dramatically in the Republic of Karelia. In 1990, the

total population of the Republic was close to 800 000 people, but and 20 years later the number was only about 650 000 people (Численность постоянного… 2013) (Figure 4). The total population of Kainuu has relatively lost almost as much of its population.

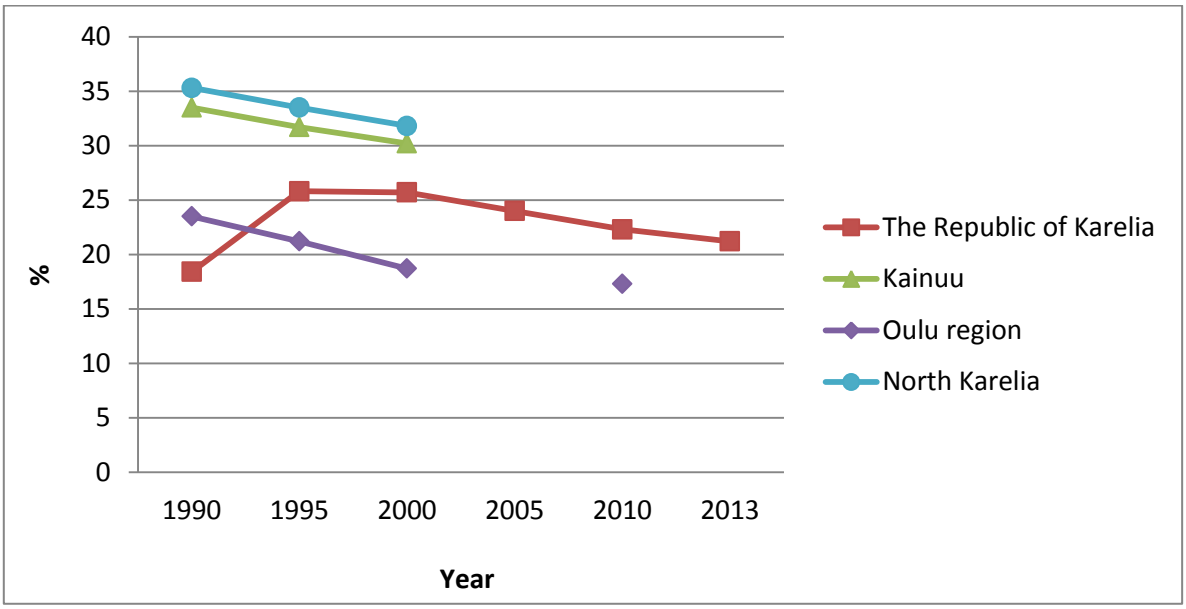

Figure 3. The shares of rural population of the total population in the target areas in 1990-2013 (sources: Suomen virallinen tilasto (SVT) 1997, Suomen virallinen tilasto (SVT) 2003, Численность постоянного… 2013).

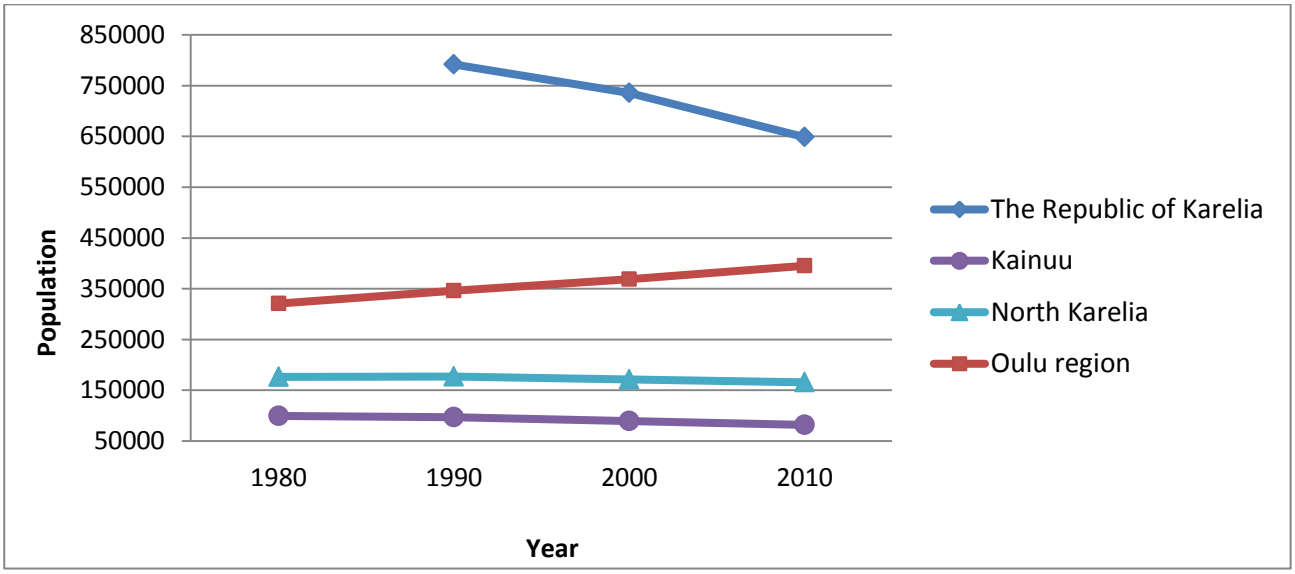

Figure 4. Total population of the target areas between 1980(1990)-2010. (sources: Suomen virallinen tilasto (SVT) 2013, Численность постоянного… 2013).

3.1 Rural development in Finland

Even though only 1.6 million people in Finland live in rural areas, these cover 98.5 % of the total land area of the country. Finland is sparsely populated and in more than 80 % of the land area there are just 0-5 inhabitants per square kilometer (Nordic Council of Ministers… 2000). There are several regions in Finland, which are experiencing rapid outmigration of people and labor force. These regions are usually rural areas, which are already sparsely populated. Ageing of the populations is another significant reason, which leads to lower dependency ratio, where the number of people in working life continues to decrease. Many regions are struggling with this phenomenon and decreasing vitality, which have been targeted by national and EU funds. One way to increase the vitality of these areas, which are suffering from depopulation, is to ensure that the people are able to participate in the information society and the digital world. Well-developed communication connections are essential in sparsely populated, rural areas where distances to services are great (Ministry of employment and the economy… 2012).

Tauriainen (1973) has observed in his study that the depopulation of the rural municipalities started in Finland in the 1950's and the 1960's. The 1950's was still a decade of continued settlement policy in the country, when new farms were still founded. The post-war land acquisition act and the followed land settlement activities still continued, as people evacuated from the former Finnish Karelia and other landless people were given keys for a new life. The focus of the land settlement activity was especially in northern and eastern parts of the country and continued well into 1960's.

Tauriainen (1973) writes further that in the middle of the 1960s, the number of farms begun to decline and the rural areas faced a fast depopulation. The number of the people employed by agriculture had, however, started to decrease already in the 1940's (Uusitalo 2009: 15). Tauriainen (1973) could already at the beginning of the 1970s note that the natural population growth had stopped by then in most rural municipalities. The rapid depopulation at the turn of the 1960's and 1970's was a result of the out-migration of the labor from agriculture and forestry sectors. In the 1960s Finland faced a heavy growth in the service sector. The most difficult employment situation was in the rural municipalities of northern and eastern Finland, which had also witnessed continued land settlement into the 1960's.

In the 1960s and the 1970s rural life faced a turning point. The period was characterized by a few changes:

- agrarian society turned into industrial and service society
- self-sufficient economy changed to exchange economy
- quick concentration of settlements/housing.

Aforementioned changes happened relatively quickly and the lack of comprehensive guidance was seen as a problem (Väänänen 1980: 11).

Väänänen (1980: 14) lists the effects of the rural depopulation. The effects included three significant factors: the deterioration of the economic power in rural villages, unbalanced age structure and dying services. Those effects also caused the weakening of social safety and satisfaction. Kuhmonen (1997:9) writes that negative trends in the Finnish countryside have been, for instance, depopulation and reduced jobs in primary production. As the primary production had lost its role, new jobs had to be created in other sectors.

In the 1990s, the future of eastern and northern Finland did not seem very bright. In many peripheral regions economic development took several setbacks and the gap between these areas and the rest of the country grew wider. This was caused partly by the cutbacks of the public economy. As the difficulties of these regions were brought to the daylight, solutions were sought by the politicians as well. One initiative was the concept of "Northern Dimension", whose key target was to promote economic interaction between Finland (eastern and northern Finland) and Russia (northern and south-western Russia). However, as Russia was still struggling with its own economic problems and challenges, eastern and northern Finland had yet to find other development models (Antikainen 2001: 92).

Uusitalo (2009: 18) has studied the development of the Finnish countryside in the 20th century and come to the conclusion that the Finnish countryside has undergone seven different stages since the late 1920's. These stages or development periods are described in the following the text box.

Development phases of the Finnish countryside since late 1920's

1. 1929-1939**:** The period of diverse and fast development
2. 1939-1949**:** The period of isolation and restart of the land settlement activity
3. 1950-1960**:** The period of fast development
4. The 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s**:** The period of land settlement and agricultural policies
5. From the end of the 1970s till the end of the 1980s**:** The period of the gestation of the sector politics and the rural policy
6. Since the 1980s**:** The period of rural policy
7. Since 1995**:** The period of the Finnish EU membership and the changes brought by the Common agricultural policy of EU and EU rural policy

According to a study by Heikki Keränen (2004: 59), the population development of Finnish countryside between 1990 and 2002 was not similar in the whole country: there was a significant population growth in one fifth of the inhabited countryside, whereas another fifth of the inhabited countryside lost some of its population. This means that the growth – as well as the reduction of the rural population – was concentrated in certain areas. Thus rural population concentrates increasingly in the same areas and is not distributed to as wide area as before. Hätälä and Rusanen (2010: 7) write that the total populated area of Finland has decreased 8 % between the years 1970 and 2007. At the same time, population grew by 15 %. This proves that concentration of the population really happens.

Hätälä and Rusanen (2010: 13) have defined rural areas (and rural population) as areas where there is only 1-100 inhabitants per square kilometer. In 1970, the share of rural population was 36 % of the total population. In 2007 the same share was only 21 %. Hätälä's and Rusanen's definition for rural area is not universal; other definitions are used as well. The specifications vary also between different countries.

The prevention of social exclusion is one of the regional development targets of Finland for the next few years in both rural and urban areas. In rural regions the challenge is to achieve balanced

regional development as well as the equality between residents. In socially sustainable community, everyone has an opportunity for personal development and a possibility to live and work in a healthy and safe environment. People also have to have an opportunity to participate in decision-making and to influence decisions that are made related to their own environment. In Finland there is a strong tendency nowadays to move towards fewer municipalities through joining of municipalities. As the municipalities are the very instances, where decisions concerning the communities are made, it has been said that this development decreases the possibilities of individual residents' to take part in the municipal decision process (Ministry of employment and the economy… 2012).

Infrastructural challenges impact also greatly the development of rural areas in Finland. In sparsely populated rural areas the interaction between urban and rural areas is necessary, which requires good transport connections and networks to succeed. Therefore, these have to be strengthened in order to keep the rural areas viable. (Ministry of employment and the economy… 2012).

The problematic features in the rural areas of Finland include the following:

- declining population
- unemployment
- infrastructural challenges
- challenges in the forestry industry
- reduction of services
- poor state of the environment
- concentration of the economy
- underdeveloped entrepreneurship and co-operation culture
- loss of faith in the future
- Additional production costs due to remote location, climate, etc. (Nordic Council of Ministers… 2000: 33).

Besides problems and challenges the rural areas of Finland also have strengths that can be utilized. Such strengths are, for example, space, quietness, spacious housing possibilities, clean natural

resources and environments, and possibilities for renewable energy. These resources can be utilized to respond to the demands of sustainable communities (Ministry of employment and the economy… 2012).

These features, which are much harder to find in cities and more densely populated settlements, still attract the Finnish people, who head every summer to their summer cottages and houses. In recent years the use of these part time homes has diversified greatly, as they have become second homes and in some cases even around the year inhabited primary homes. Part time dwellers, and especially those who chose to spend longer periods in the country, can contribute into keeping the rural areas viable. Even if the general trend points towards higher concentration of population in urban areas, there are those, who head to the opposite direction. Times have changed, and the rural areas have gained importance in new ways (Maaseutukatsaus 2011… 2011).

3.2 Rural development in the Republic of Karelia

After the World War II the reconstruction was a laborious task in Soviet Karelia, because settlements had been destroyed, population numbers had sunk and industrial plants had been evacuated. In the post-war Soviet Karelia priority was given to forest industry, which was given plenty of both financial and labor resources. In the late 1940s Soviet Karelia was industrialized heavily, but the political leaders of the Soviet Union saw the area mainly as a raw material source. The heavy utilization of the local resources in this area richness of the area caused pollution and a breakdown of the traditional lifestyle. Post-war time was thus characterized by heavy urbanization and by the beginning of the 1990s more than 80 % of Karelia's population lived in urban areas (Nevalainen 1993: 295-296).

Varis (1996: 12-19) has studied the rural restructuring in the rural areas of the Karelian Republic. She has studied the topic by following the villages of Virma and Gridino located on the White Sea. Based on her findings of the villages' development Varis has made generalizations that can be applied to the development throughout Russian Karelia. In this study structural change of the rural areas of Karelia is divided into seven periods. The periods are introduced below.

1. The period of the collectivization (1928-1938)
    - rural industries and private property were collectivized. Most households joined the *kolkhoz*

- religion was forbidden
- life was strictly governed by rules

2. The period of the impact of the war (1939-1944)
   - Karelia was partly a war zone
   - production was in confusion and dominated by the war industry
   - the kolkhozes did not work as they were supposed to

3. The period of the impact of the growing forest industry (1945-1955)
   - agricultural kolkhozes were closed from the beginning of the 1950's onwards and the number of fishing kolkhozes was reduced
   - Karelia became a key producer of forestry products in Russia
   - forest settlements were settled by people from former kolkhozes and by new settlers coming outside of Karelia

4. Policy of the large economic units (1956-1963)
   - agricultural and settlement policy aimed at increased productivity and efficiency
   - large economic units were considered profitable
   - only the most productive fishing kolkhozes were kept open

5. The period of stagnation (1964-1984)
   - rural conditions were unstable
   - at the end of 1960's forestry work and need for labor decreased
   - rural areas faced depopulation, increased urbanization

6. The period of *perestroika* (1985-1990)
   - a new era of *perestroika* (restructuring), *glasnost* (openness) and democratization
   - rural living conditions worsened rapidly in Karelia as the economy and the politics were rationalized
   - public services in the rural areas suffered and at times some food products were missing altogether

7. The collapse of the Soviet Union (1991-)
    - gradual development towards a market economy
    - the state pushed for privatization confused people, but some people did not understand the idea of privatization at all

The period of stagnation led to a strong depopulation of the rural areas. In 1990 only 18.4 % of the Karelian population lived in rural areas as it can be seen in Figure 3. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, the share of the rural population rose for a while and in 1995 25.8 % of the total population lived in rural areas. Today (1 January 2013) the number is about 21 %

The Republic of Karelia is facing many basic problems, which prevent it from becoming a sustainable region. Tynkkynen (2001) has studied especially water related health risks in the Karelian Republic. He writes that "the clearing of large areas of forest, the measures taken to "improve" forest soil and peatlands, and the pollution from industrial and municipal waste water have all seriously disrupted the ecological balance over large areas of Karelia".

Tynkkynen (2006) writes about the challenges of the regional planning and sustainable development in north-western Russia (which in his work includes St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast, the Republic of Karelia and the Komi Republic). He argues that the principles of sustainability should be taken seriously in North-West Russia, where there are great socio-economic differences within the population, reduced civic involvement and serious ecological and environmental-health problems.

Tynkkynen (2001: 151) lists five sociopolitical problems that are in the background of the weak water and environmental-health policy implementation in the Republic of Karelia. These five problems can be in some cases applied to other development problems in Karelia as well. The five sociopolitical problems are the following (with the author's italicizations pointing out the parts that could generally be applied to the problems of other development sectors in the Karelian Republic too):

1. *too many administrative bodies taking care of* water protection, use and purification after use, which in part leads to
2. *uncoordinated and haphazard* regional environmental and health *policies*,

3. *low fees collected* from household water users,
4. low fees collected from industrial polluters and users of fresh water, and
5. *corruption*, which sends forestry money flowing into other hands than those in charge of the water supply.

Russian peripheral regions still have only a few opportunities to make decisions concerning their own territories, although after the collapse of the Soviet Union local governance has, in principle, been given a more central role.. However, economic growth still comes first in north-western Russia and the reduction of environmental and health problems are not taken that seriously. There are great challenges in the Republic of Karelia to actualize social objectives that include also the recognition of local knowledge in sustainable development. The social objectives of sustainable development in regional planning are not likely to be met in the near future whereas environmental standards might be put into action (Tynkkynen 2006).

3.3 Comparing the development in Finland and in the Republic of Karelia

In the Russian Karelia, the development was long influenced by the Soviet power and after that by the challenges that the collapse of the Soviet system caused. The system of kolkhozes was typical for the soviet system and differed greatly from the rural life in Finland at the same time. During the last century, the most significant turning points in rural life have been the end of the Second World War in Finland and the collapse of the Soviet Union in Russia. There have been other turning points as well, but these two have had greatest impact in many fields of the life.

In the 1920s and 1930s the socialist system was set up in Soviet Union: private property was collectivized and kolkhozes were founded. In Finland, instead, rural areas faced fast and diverse development, which was not tied to governmental system unlike in Soviet Union. The Winter War and the Continuation War naturally influenced the life in Finland and in the Soviet Karelia as well. After the wars forest industries saw a period of boost in the Soviet Karelia, which led to immigration of employees from other regions. Kolkhozes were closed, but forestry kolkhozes continued to bloom. In Finland land settlement activity continued vigorously after the war until 1960's, after which the Finnish countryside started to lose its inhabitants fast.

The 20th century was very different in Finnish and Russian Karelian rural areas, but some common

features can be found. Both Finland and the Republic of Karelia have faced heavy depopulation of rural areas especially since the 1960's. The Finnish countryside developed fast as land settlement policies were continued till the late 1960's, but in the Soviet Union instead a socialized system and kolkhozes were prevailing systems. When a kolkhoz was closed, there was not real means of living in that very area anymore. The closing of kolkhozes led to diminishing rural population.

Democratization did not start in the Soviet Union until at the end of the 1980s. Finland, on the other hand, has developed in the decades following the Finnish independence in 1917 into a modern democratic, capitalistic country. About 70 years were lost with the soviet experiment in Russia, which explains why there is still a big developmental and welfare gap between Finland and Russia. However, this gap has become narrower during the last couple decades, at least in term of economy.

4 Rural sustainable development

Rural sustainable development simply includes the dimensions of sustainable development in rural areas. Rural sustainable development in Europe often focuses on environmental sustainability. That is the sector for which most incentives are also directed. Economic and especially social and cultural sustainability have traditionally got less attention and their development has been based more on the endogenous basis (Varley et al. 2009: 6). In rural areas especially farmers had received incentives and support from governance regimes to improve their production processes and livelihoods. The aim of this activity was the well-being and sustainability of the rural areas (Ruben et al. 2007).

As it was noted earlier, "rural" is often associated to "agriculture". However, in rural economy agriculture should not be the only economic sector. A rural economy based only on agriculture is not sufficient for realizing sustainable development. Also non-agricultural rural economy needs to be taken into account. Usually non-agricultural economies are connected to external actors, who bring employment and establish links with and between communities. It is very important also to take the local peculiarities into account and to notice the significance of local or tacit knowledge too (Tovey et al. 2009: 247-248).

The economy is, on average, weaker in the countryside. That is why it is important to consider how rural areas could cope in this rivalry with the cities. Rosenqvist (2003:14) argues that there are probably no alternatives to the capitalist economy model and therefore other aspects have to be taken into consideration. Rural areas could focus on their own strengths – for instance on spatial, symbolic and metaphoric aspects – and develop these. Rural areas may not be able to compete with the economic issues, but they have other assets.

European Union has targeted the problems of the rural areas with the LEADER programme, which was started in 1991. The main goals of the programme were to make services and products of rural areas more competitive, and encourage "bottom-up" development together with a partnership dimension. The aims of the partnership approach in rural areas were to make products and services more competitive, to add value to local production and to improve the quality of life. It was thought that local participation would be a key element in the function of local area partnerships. However, there is still much to improve in bottom-up approaches in rural

areas (Varley et al. 2009: 6-7).

Hill (2005: 60) lists typical problems facing rural areas. Here are mentioned some of them that can be connected with rural regions of the target areas of this project as well:

- lack of access to basic needs
- increasing dependencies on subsidies and imported inputs
- dependence on unstable markets and other external factors
- stress-related and degenerative conditions.

The claims presented above apply most likely to the target areas of the GREENSETTLE-project. However, Hill (2005: 60) lists some other issues in addition to these that can occur in rural areas. Those are quite strong claims and rural areas alone cannot be branded by the following characteristics:

- learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, and depression
- aggressive and self-harming behaviors
- the feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and helplessness.

Bruckmeier and Tovey (2009) see the local rural level sustainable development as a matter of development of both civic society and economic practices. When projects for rural sustainable development aim to develop the territorial integration of actors and when they are willing to combine expert and local knowledge, they are likely to be successful.

Tovey et al. (2009: 258) write about the Scottish case study of Dúchas. In Dúchas it was realized that in order to promote sustainable rural development a local participatory approach was strongly needed. The most important finding of the study was to acknowledge that “bringing together local knowledge and external expertise is a key step in empowering local communities for sustainable development.”

5 Sustainable community

Defining "sustainability" and "community" is not easy, as for instance Hempel (2009: 33) has pointed out, and putting the terms together does not make the task any easier. Hempel (2009: 35) has admitted also, that the concept of sustainability in itself might not be that difficult to define. However, when sustainability needs to be put to action in practice, then the real difficulties begin.

The term "community" can be defined in a variety of ways. Ferninand Tönnies thoughts about community are well known and his distinction between modern society (*Gesellschaft*) and premodern communities (*Gemeinschaft*) are widely acknowledged.

According to this distinction, *Gemeinschaft* is a place-based community, where people are united by deep social relations and there are strong familial and kinship networks. People live in a place with limited spatial mobility and there are plenty of face-to-face relations. People thus frequently interact. In a *Gesellschaft*, instead, people live separate and individuated lives although they might live together in spatial proximate ways.

In a *Gesellschaft* people choose communities of their special interest, but a certain place or living environment in itself does not necessarily form an interacting community (Aitken 2009: 222). Widely thinking, there are nowadays many kinds of communities in the Internet, for example. They are usually formed by people who have the same interests and like to do the same things. However, in this report community gets a more traditional definition by being more like Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft* with a certain geographical place and affinity. Here community is linked to a municipality or a neighborhood rather than to an Internet community.

Dale (2005: 14) writes that communities in general are not homogenous but they differ greatly in resources, capacity, and their understanding about sustainable development. Of course it is natural that communities and their ways of thinking differ from one another, because already their geographic, historical and ecological backgrounds are varying, and every community has unique socioeconomic and cultural conditions. That is, the communities are diversified in both physical and non-physical characteristics. Because of all these differences, communities' engagement in sustainability issues varies a lot as well.

Salamon and MacTavish (2009: 423), who have studied rural communities, describe them as a

"strongly identified with a particular geographic space" and "a small-scale, compact settlement with clear boundaries". Salamon and MacTavish argue that historically rural communities were places in remote areas that lacked transportation links and thereby also contact with the wider society. Though for almost every indicator of population growth, income, well-being, employment and socioeconomic status rural communities lag behind the urban ones, on average people are more satisfied with their lives in rural communities than urban people are in theirs.

Traditionally municipalities and other administrative units have focused mainly on economic development strategies, but in recent times more and more attention is directed also on environmental dimensions. However, communal dimensions are today still often forgotten. It should be remembered that all those three dimensions are strongly interrelated, and in sustainable development all of them need to be acknowledged (see e.g. Silberstein 2010).

Table 1. System conditions and guiding objectives of TNS framework (James & Lahti 2004: 6-9).

System conditions
1. Nature is not subject to systematically increasing concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust.
2. Nature is not subject to systematically increasing concentrations of substances produced by society.
3. Nature is not subject to systematically increasing degradation by physical means.
4. Human needs are met worldwide.

Guiding objectives
1. Eliminate a community's contribution to fossil fuel dependence and to wasteful use of scarce metals and minerals.
2. Eliminate a community's contribution to dependence upon persistent chemicals and wasteful use of synthetic substances.
3. Eliminate a community's contribution to encroachment upon nature (e.g., land, water, wildlife, forests, soil, ecosystems).
4. Meet human needs fairly and efficiently.

In their book James and Lahti (2004) introduce the principles of The Natural Step (TSN) framework. TNS has its roots in Sweden of the late 1980's, when Karl-Henrik Robért started a dialogue to develop a set of principles that could guide people toward a more sustainable life. The Natural Step framework includes four Natural Step system conditions (Table 1). Every condition needs to

be met, if a society want's to be sustainable. In addition there are four guiding objectives that are formulated to achieve the conditions. The system conditions and guiding objectives are planned especially for the purpose of municipalities. In both four-step cases presented, it is important that all the steps are noticed to reach the best results.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has underlined that democracy, openness, and participation form a basis for a sustainable community. In a community everyone must have certain rights in relation to environmental (and other) issues in order to complete sustainability can be reached. These rights are: the right to information, the right to involvement in the preparation of decisions, and the right to complain about decisions. Community members need to have possibilities to influence. Public needs to be involved in decisions, preparing of legislation and in public planning, which requires dialogue between local authorities and the community (Nordic Council of Ministers… 2001).

It is possible to estimate the level of the sustainability by using different indicators. There is no single sustainability indicator, which would describe how sustainable a community or a state is, but there are many separate indicators that measure sustainability in different sectors. By using a variety of indicators it is possible to get a fair idea of a certain community's level of sustainability. First, here are mentioned some of the possible indicators of sustainability according to Nordic Indicators (Nordic Council of Ministers… 2006):

- protected natural areas
- renewables' share of gross energy consumption
- emissions of greenhouse gases
- traffic and air pollution
- discharge of heavy metals with water
- household waste per capita
- organic farms
- fair trade
- unemployment
- voter turnout
- fertility rate

- overweight.

According to Hempel (2009: 53) the indicators of the sustainability of a community can be, for example, the following:

- ecological footprint
- percent of new jobs paying a livable wage
- total vehicular CO_2 emissions / year
- percent of solid waste diverted to recycling
- packs of cigarettes sold per person per year.

There are also many other indicators to measure sustainability, but the indicators above sum up the diversity of the concept of sustainability. James and Lahti (2004: 184) have point out that every community has yet to find out its own best way to develop toward a sustainable community. They emphasize that "there are no package solutions towards this goal".

5.1 Eco-municipalities

Silberstein (2010: 468) defines an eco-municipality as following: "an eco-municipality is an area, not necessarily defined by geopolitical boundaries that has adopted ecological and social justice values and The Natural Step". In principle, eco-municipality is a sustainable community, or at least it aims to be sustainable. Alongside e.g. green building and alternative energy projects, activities built around the idea of an eco-municipality can also be regarded as sustainable development projects. What then makes eco-municipalities different from other sustainable development projects is that the focus of an eco-municipality project is on community engagement.

The idea of eco-municipality is often said to originatedfrom Sweden – however, there was at least the eco-municipality of Suomussalmi in Finland before the Swedes had used the idea in practice. James and Lahti (2004: 28-29) write in their book more about the Swedish eco-municipalities. In 2004, when their study was published, more than 60 communities in Sweden had made changes toward sustainability. In short, the goal of the Swedish eco-municipalities is to become sustainable communities and they use the earlier described Natural Step framework to achieve their goal. Sizes of the the participating communities in Sweden range from villages with populations around 300 to cities with populations over 500 000. The municipalities have varying backgrounds; others

have experienced very deep economic slump, others want to strengthen the position of indigenous (Sami) peoples and so forth. What the municipalities have in common is that each of them has made a collective commitment to sustainable change, and they have implemented participatory processes involving the residents and municipal employees. In Swedish eco-municipalities the citizens have found locally suited ways to move toward a more sustainable community.

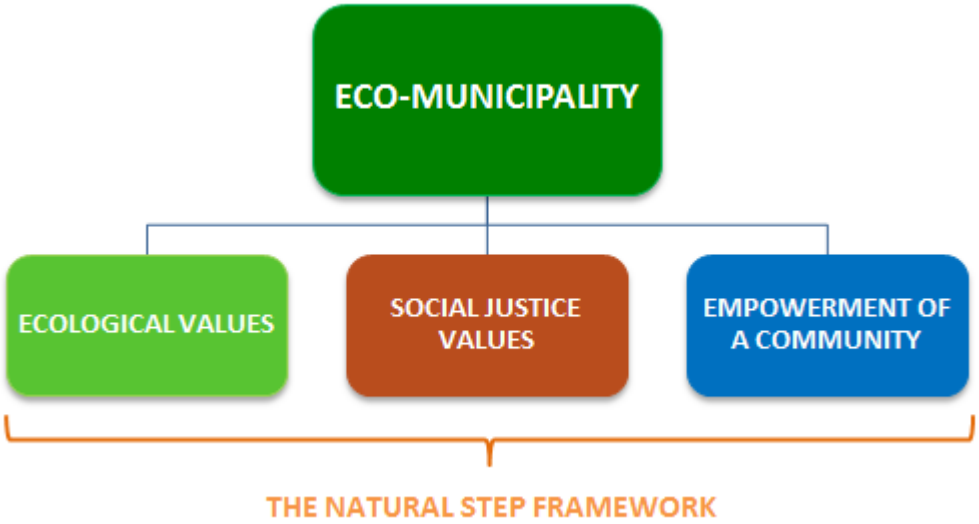

Figure 5. Dimensions of an eco-municipality.

Sweden and Finland are not the only countries where the idea of eco-municipalities has been put into practice. Silberstein (2010) writes about the adoption of the eco-municipality idea in the USA, where it has been adopted especially in rural communities. There are (or were) also eco-municipalities at least in Norway, Denmark and Estonia (James & Lahti 2004).

The concept of eco-municipality is strongly linked with a long-term "systems approach". The systems approach to community concentrates on the relationship between the parts of community and it also means the diversifying of the local economy. One main assumption of the systems approach is that a long-term financial well-being is linked to long-term social capital. That is, if social capital is low, the level of the growth of financial capital is diminished. Systems approach can be put into practice in many ways; for example by assuring excellent health care, access to culture, a healthy housing, and by plugging the economic leaks etc. (Silberstein 2010:

470, 473).

Projects of eco-municipalities can differ greatly from those of eco-cities. Smaller geographic areas and small population sizes enable more intensive and more communal collaboration.

The project ”Ecovillages for sustainable rural development”

Ecovillages-project is a project that is funded by European Union and contributed by project partners. The project is financed by the “Baltic Sea Region programme 2007-2013” and it is implemented in 2010-2013.

The aim of the project is to combine social–cultural environment with a low-impact way of living. The activities undertaken in the project will foster the ecovillages in the rural areas of the Baltic Region toward a more sustainable way of living.

The project is still underway, but the main outputs of the project are going to be the following:

- Three manuals based on case studies:
    1. Eco-settling practices
    2. Environmentally-friendly technologies
    3. Community living and social development in ecovillages
- A socio-economic sustainability assessment online tool for ecovillages
- Recommendations for decision-makers concerning ecovillages’ proper development
- The ecovillage road of the Baltic Sea Region. This will help people to find those ecovillages, where internship programs are available for tourists (Ecovillages for sustainable… 2013).

5.2 Case: Eco-municipality of Suomussalmi

Municipality of Suomussalmi, which is located in the Kainuu region near the Finnish-Russian border, is one of the pioneers of ecovillages, as was mentioned earlier. The municipality was founded in 1867 after the Finnish municipality reform. At the end of the year 2012 the population of the municipality was 8 813 (Tietoa Suomussalmen… 2013).

In 1980, Suomussalmi became the first eco-municipality in the Nordic countries. Together with the Swedish municipality of Övertorneå, which became the first eco-municipality in Sweden in 1983, Suomussalmi is a "member" of the first generation of eco-municipalities. Before the start of their eco-municipality experiments, both Suomussalmi and Övertorneå were struggling with economic and social depression. As eco-municipalities their goal was to integrate ecological, social and economic action and take more sustainable actions (James & Lahti 2004).

According to Heikurainen (1992: 15-16) the following objective was set by a group of experts for the Suomussalmi eco-municipality: "The integration of the human economy with the area's natural economy to safeguard the production of all renewable natural resources and the prosperity of the villages now and in the future, and to provide the municipality's inhabitants with job opportunities." The objective was to be achieved through different kind of activities. The greatest expectation was, however, to create new jobs, in which they succeeded.

The early years of the eco-municipality project in Suomussalmi were a learning process. There were some fundamental misunderstandings, since the people (at least in Suomussalmi) tended to think that eco-municipality simply meant adaptation of ecological agriculture, which did not therefore have anything to do with ordinary people, just the farmers. Explaining the true nature of the project to the people and making them understand that eco-municipality was meant to affect their lives as well took about five years (Heikurainen 1992: 18).

According to a report from 1983, 54 % of the farmers in Suomussalmi were interested in ecological agriculture. Many of the farmers also carried out some ecological farming experiments, but these experiments did not develop into permanent practice of ecological agriculture. The farming and marketing, for example, proved challenging and in the end led to the return to the traditional cultivation methods. Ten years after the start of the eco-municipality experiment there were probably less real ecological farmers in the territory of the municipality of Suomussalmi than in other municipalities in Kainuu (Heikurainen 1992: 15, 17).

Heikurainen (1992: 17) states that the developers of the idea of the Suomussalmi eco-municipality assumed in the beginning that "ecologically grown" products would be easy to market. However, these expectations were not met, because the "*eco*" had not yet additional value compared to normal agricultural products. Malinen (1992: 21) writes that the emerging "green wave" was in

the background of the eco-municipality project, but in early 1980's ecological thinking was not a general trend yet, which can be partly blamed for the failure of the ecological agriculture in Suomussalmi.

Malinen (1992: 22) states that also divergent opinions of different stakeholders: decision makers, inhabitants, nature activists, and state authorities caused major problems in the eco-projects of Suomussalmi. It was difficult to agree on common goals for the different actors.

The idea and image of eco-municipality did not meet that much interest among the entrepreneurs of the business sector, as the enthusiastic developers were to find out. "Ecotourism village plan" was introduced to the tourism sector, but plan did not materialize into actual project due to lack of interest. Nevertheless, there were some more successful initiatives in the business sector, but they were mostly implemented by the municipality itself and not by the private sector (Heikurainen 1992: 17).

The most successful business world projects were (Heikurainen 1992: 17):

- a bee keeping training, development and research project
- a reindeer project concentrating on the refining of reindeer products
- "eco-product project" (*ekotuoteprojekti*).

The aim of the "eco-product project" was to increase the competitiveness of the food production and to upgrade the degree of refining of local food products. All the aforementioned successful projects generated new jobs and new production in Suomussalmi (Heikurainen 1992: 17).

The eco-municipality project was successful in increasing the local people's knowledge and skills in ecological issues and sustainability, although the results were not reached fully. The project brought also positive environmental impacts, for instance the surroundings of Kiantajärvi and Vuokkijärvi lakesides and fishing grounds were cleaned up. In villages and other population centers the villagers cleaned the environment and also the waste management was developed toward a more ecological direction (Heikurainen 1992: 18).

6 Community participation (in sustainable development)

The Nordic Council of Ministers has taken the sustainable development into one of its core focus areas and has drawn guidelines for how to achieve this. One of the aspects, which the council has brought forward, is the community participation. All the stakeholders of a community must be committed and contribute to the sustainable development in order that this goal can be achieved in the 21st century. According to the objectives toward sustainable development, broad public participation in the decision-making process is a necessity (Nordic Council of Ministers… 2001). Call for participatory approaches has been on the agenda already for some time, but it is only in the recent years that participation has become a noteworthy aspect in community planning and governance. Today, community participation is at a core in decision-making of community's life (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009: 3). Yet it has to be noted that none of the community participation models can be applied universally, because national traditions impact the degrees and levels of involvement and decision-making (Bracht & Tsouros 1990). Anyway, most of the participatory approaches are to be applied in both rural and urban communities.

Figure 6. Dimensions of the community-centered planning process (information from Kuikka 2004: 82-84).

Bruckmeier and Tovey (2009) mention, that "the idea of participatory development, or democracy in development, is a central element in the global discourse of sustainable development". More

and more communities around the world are using participatory approaches to change their systems. This means that local residents are involved and participate in developing and planning processes to make changes toward a more sustainable community. This challenges the traditional way of doing things, where plans were made by municipal government and employees and the opinions of the residents were hardly taken into account. In participatory approaches it is important to develop communities toward democratic and bottom-up approaches (James & Lahti 2004: 180, 183). In the Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development (World Commission on Culture and Development… 1995: 135) it is mentioned that the value of local knowledge has been recognized especially in areas of rural development.

6.1 The concept of "community participation"

"Participation" is again a controversial term, which means different things to different people and stakeholders. According to Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009: 4) participation can be divided into two different approaches that are *a social movement perspective* and *a project-based or institutional perspective*. These approaches may have divergent goals and methods, but what they have in common, is the "understanding of participation as the involvement of ordinary people in a development process leading to change". Understandably people living close to the planned changes are more likely to participate in planning and argumentation than those who are living further away (Marquart-Pyatt & Petrzelka 2008: 266).

Table 2. Terms of community participation and concepts describing the process of community participation according to Bracht & Tsouros (1990: 201).

Terms	Processes
citizen participation	community development
citizen involvement	community action
consumer participation	community organization
consensus seeking	democratic action
community involvement	community planning
community control – self reliance	
community partnership / collaboration	

There are many different terms to describe the concept of "community participation". Sometimes the word "community" is replaced with such words as "local", "public", "civic" or "citizen". Bracht and Tsouros (1990: 201) list terms describing community participation as well as the concepts that

describe the processes of community participation (Table 2).

Community participation is thus a multifold concept and there is no single term to describe the action. There can be fine differences between different terms – depending on who is using the term and in which context. Above Bracht and Tsouros (1990) make a division between the commonly used *terms* and *processes* of community participation, but they are often used overlapping, because many do not make a difference between them.

Dietz and Stern (2008: 12) use the term "public participation" and define it in their study – which is made from an environmental perspective – as following: "any of a variety of mechanisms and processes used to involve and draw on members of the public or their representatives in the activities of public or private-sector organizations that are engaged in informing or making environmental assessments or decisions".

Participation can be divided in many ways. Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009: 6-7) divide participation and communication types into four different perceptions:

1. passive participation
2. participation by consultation
3. participation by collaboration
4. empowerment participation.

Here, passive participation is the least participatory approach, where stakeholders participate mainly just by being informed what is happening. The fourth one, empowerment participation, enables joint decision-making and stakeholders' engagement in the process. Two other perceptions (numbers 2 and 3) are something between the two described above.

6.2 Sustainable decision-making

Figure 7 shows simplified two decision-making alternatives. There are three peripheral locations and one center depicted. Now, if the community carries out centralized decision-making (alternative A), the peripheral units would have to wait until the center told them what to do. Yet, in a sustainable community there should be a decentralized situation (alternative B) instead of centralized and hierarchical decision-making. In decentralized decision-making, the role of the center is simply supportive and guiding, and centers and peripheral locations interact in either

direction (Light et al. 2004: 16).

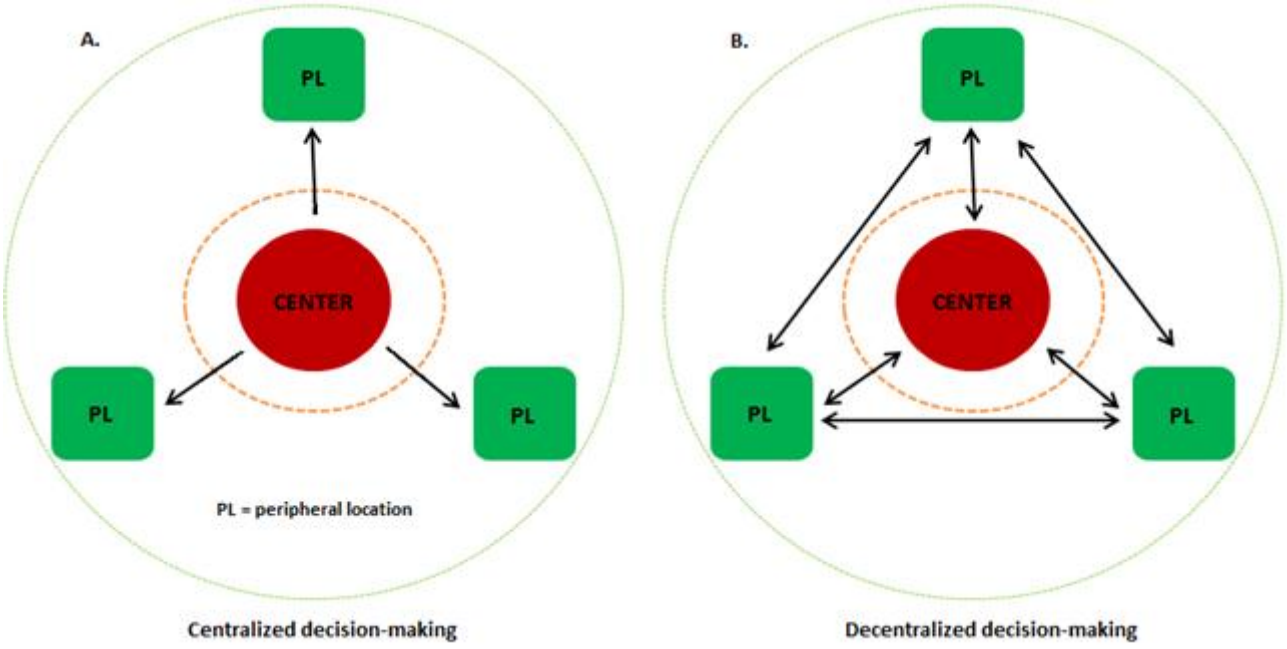

Figure 7. Centralized and decentralized decision-making models.

James and Lahti (2004) introduce the idea of a community team, where not only the municipal government of a community plays a role, but also residents, neighborhoods, businesses and public and non-profit institutions are important players in the field. In terms of sustainability, the ideal would be such a situation where all the departments and agencies of a municipality had a common vision of the sustainable future and had the same idea how to achieve it.

Table 3. The Johari Window (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009: 21)

Window 1: **OPEN KNOWLEDGE** What we know and they know	Window 3: **THEIR HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE** What they know and we do not know
Window 2: **OUR HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE** What we know and they do not know	Window 4: **THE BLIND SPOT** What neither we nor they know

The Johari Window (Table 3) illustrates a joint decision-making process. When all the four

windows are taken into account, the best possible change can be achieved. “We” refers here to outside experts and “they” to local stakeholders. The Johari Window was originally developed by Joseph Luft and Harry Inghman to picture an interpersonal communication process (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009: 21-22).

Local stakeholders may have surprisingly much of so called hidden knowledge, which is not always given the value it should get. For example, Tovey et al. (2009: 258) note that local conservation actors, who often are “self-taught” or “citizen experts”, may have a high degree of specialized knowledge in different fields. Their knowledge can be very well developed, but usually they are not seen as recognized experts in comparison with those formally recognized.

Local knowledge, which is sometimes tacit knowledge (knowledge about social relationships and practices) as well, is thought to be an opposite of scientific knowledge. Its position still is controversial and underrated in decision-making and planning processes.

There is often such a view too, that rural populations lack knowledge. That is why it is thought that they do not possess as much competence to talk about knowledge and human capital than other groups of society (Bruckmeier & Tovey 2009: 269, 273).

Measures that can be used to measure the level of the citizen involvement:

- opportunity for and level of decision-making or advising
- amount and duration of time devoted to goal activities
- representativeness of citizen and leader groups formed
- degree of local ownership perceived and/or achieved
- satisfaction with the processes of participation
- achievement and long term maintenance effort (Bracht & Tsouros 1990: 201).

Urban environments in their complexity can offer a stronger base for developing formal ways and structures, through which community participation can be mediated. Informal, ad hoc citizen approaches occur more often in rural areas and small towns (Bracht & Tsouros 1990: 201).

Though sustainable development issues are discussed much today, many residents and local officials still do not know how serious sustainability-related issues should be taken, and they do not understand their real effects on their own communities' well-being. These unfortunate facts may even stop the journey to community sustainability (James & Lahti 2004: 3).

6.3 Community engagement practices

There are many alternative participatory tools for communities. As a project is being launched, public meetings and the use of media are useful tools to inform public about the project. In the middle stages of a project round table workshops and community appraisals can be used, for instance. However, it has to be remembered that community involvement is always *a process*. That is, public hearing solely is not sufficient, but community must be involved in the whole planning or decision-making process (Moseley 2004: 127-128).

Broadly defined, public participation can include many kinds of action. The list of Dietz and Stern (2008: 11) includes the following actions:

- voting
- expressing opinions on public issues and governmental actions
- forming interest groups or holding public demonstrations
- lobbying
- filing lawsuits to contest government actions
- producing films, songs etc. to mobilize public attention to issues

Dietz and Stern (2008: 112) introduce also more precisely forms of public participation, which they call "formats". Some of the formats are introduced in Table 4. None of the formats is always workable. All the formats may fail in their objectives, but they can also be very successive. When choosing a format for public participation, there needs to be a good reason for the selection, and it has to be carefully considered if the format really suits the purpose or not. Dividing lines between different formats are always not clear and they share many common elements.

Table 4. Public participation "formats" (Dietz & Stern 2008: 112).

Broad formats	More specific formats
advisory committees	consensus-building exercices
deliberative polling	debates
focus groups	field trips
listening sessions	media campaigns
online deliberation	panels
open houses	participatory budgeting
policy dialogues	scenario-building exercices
public hearings	surveys
scoping meetings	web sites
task forces	visioning exercices
town meetings	working groups
workshops	voting

All the formats listed above are thus forms of public participation. The list is not exhaustive – there are still many other forms to choose from. The rarer used forms include, among others, creative methods.

Sarkissian et al. (2010) have written a book about creative community planning. In his foreword, John Forester mentions that Sarkissian and her colleagues challenge the traditional idea of knowledge coming first and action only after the knowledge. Creative community planning is based on the view that traditional community engagement is not always sufficient. That is why it is argued in the book that "creativity is the necessary work of evolving community engagement practice using methods that honour people's individual and collective knowledge about their lives and their environments" (Sarkissian et al. 2010: 4-5).

Creative community planning is not a single effective formula for community planning, but it includes good methods of carrying out such work. For example, "acting like a child" is one concept which can be used to relax community members and thus evoke their spontaneity and creativity. Adults are thus encouraged to optimism and to see the future as a pure horizon. This makes planning more diverse and brings out plenty of ideas – rationality and (restricted) professional thinking can be forgotten for a while (Sarkissian et al. 2010). The purpose of this kind of action is

not to make people feel they are unsophisticated and incapable for rational thinking, but to encourage them to envision the future more unrestrictedly.

Also the engagement of children – and young people – in planning can be a fertile process in itself. Children and young people are often totally forgotten in planning processes. They have a wide knowledge of their living environment though and they do not have such inhibitions in their planning and development ideas that the adults often have (Sarkissian et al. 2010).

Community members are different in their ways of learning, adopting and applying ideas. That is why in creative community planning different personalities are to be taken into account. Sarkissian et al. (2010: 58-59) write about visual, auditory and kinaesthetic (VAT) people. For the kinaesthetic person it is important that the visioning script simulates a physical experience. That experience can include words or music. All people do not learn and adopt new things in the same way. When providing suitable participatory methods for people with different characteristics, the outcome can be even more various and imaginative. Of course, resources rarely suffice to that wide engagement.

Community visioning is one tool to use in the community engagement. A community visioning method is usually used as a part of a planning process. The community visioning process starts with a focused imaging of the future and after that follows a “leap into the future” with deep listening. The key features of the community visioning are

- extensive participation
- an emphasis on community values
- wide use of graphics and visual materials
- exploration of alternative futures
- an emphasis on a shared vision (Sarkissian et al. 2010: 45-46).

In developing participatory communication strategies it is good to acknowledge the importance of the media. Media can further the communication between participating stakeholders. Though it is important to choose suitable media to communicate and inform people. There are media of different levels or types. It depends on the situation whether it is useful to use community media or interned-based communication, or whether the local level of the media is sufficient or not.

These kind of things should be considered when choosing the most effective and suitable media for participatory communication (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009: 12).

Films were mentioned earlier among suitable methods for the community engagement. Sarkissian et al. (2010) write also about the use of films both as engagement and for engagement. Films can express voices, texts, images and data of varying opinions simultaneously in one story. Also poetry and photographing can be used in community involvement process – the sky is the limit!

It should be remembered that it is not always necessary to require full participation from all the stakeholders – actually it is not even possible that a single stakeholder would have a possibility to participate fully in every stage of the communication cycle. In any case, to make a community genuinely participatory, communication between stakeholders needs to be two-way from the beginning of the process (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009: 20).

The key thing to remember in community engagement action is that the local and traditional knowledge offer valuable information in planning processes. People can be involved in decision-making in many ways and it is always good if there are more than just one or a couple of them. Different engagement practices can be used at different stages of the implementation of a project.

6.4 Challenges in community involvement

Wide community engagement should be one of the most important targets in planning and decision-making processes. Yet, community participation is not that easy to enable. Bracht and Tsouros (1990: 204) list common difficulties in implementing community participation:

- lack of official/political support
- difficulty in determining “representatives”
- takes longer to achieve goals
- opens up potential for more conflict
- simply a “front” for professional manipulation
- brings out “professional” volunteers only.

Some of the above mentioned difficulties are, by implication, occurred in this report earlier as well. People who involve themselves in community planning are often the same minority of the

community who take part in other "voluntary action" too. Those people may already know much about the things that are handled in participatory processes. Local people's opinions and knowledge can also be understated. Naturally, when involving more people in participation processes, the whole planning or decision-making process might take much longer and there might be more contradictory viewpoints.

Torgerson and Edwards (2012) from Oregon, USA, studied the demographic determinants of perceived barriers to community involvement. They used the data of the 2000 Social Benchmark Survey (conducted in 41 communities in the USA) to examine rural/urban differences. They studied how some personal characteristics might influence the level of the involvement. Personal characteristics in this context included age, income and homeownership, employment, gender and family, education and race/ethnicity.

The findings of Torgerson and Edward's study showed that, for example younger respondents more often identified barriers to community involvement than middle-aged or elder respondents. Rural women were more likely to mention transportation barriers to involvement compared with urban women – this is of course understandable. Homeownership was noticed to reduce barriers to community involvement. In general, women – especially those living in rural areas – named more barriers than the men did.

There are thus problems and barriers that make participation processes more challenging. Barriers to participation can be difficult to remove. And – as James and Lahti (2004) state it – the truth is that while solving one problem, we often simultaneously create other ones. This is also typical in sustainable development, where community actors often have divergent opinions and may work at cross-purposes.

Why are then the community engagement and the local participation so important in the present world? To sustain something to next generations, we have to think about the future of our communities, countries and the whole world. Einstein has put it as following:

Wir können Probleme nicht mit den gleichen Denkmustern lösen, die zu ihnen geführt haben.

In English this means that "We cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used

when we created them" (Sarkissian et al. 2010: 49).

6.5 Case: Community planning project "Asu kylässä!"

On average, residents of rural villages are nowadays very interested in the planning of their own living environment. However, the planning process has to be organized so that there is enough space for participation. In addition, suitable methods are needed in order to make successful and democratic plans. In 1998-2000 a community-oriented planning method was implemented, which was based on industrial and commercial activity (ASU) in Finland. "Asu kylässä!" (*"Live in a village!"*) –project in 2002-2004 continued and went further than the ASU-project.

The aim of the Asu kylässä! –project, which was implemented by ProAgria Oulu and financed by the Rural Unit of Employment and Economic Development Office of Northern Ostrobothnia, was to use and develop community-centered planning methods for the development of villages. 83 villages applied to the project, but only 14 were chosen. All the chosen villages were located in different municipalities in Oulu region in Finland. (Kuikka 2004) Some departments, researchers and students of the University of Oulu were involved in the project as well (Ponnikas 2005: 9).

Attention was given particularly to interactive and participative aspects. Target groups of the project were residents, policy-makers and the local authorities (Ponnikas et al. 2005: 9). One of the main targets of the "Asu kylässä" –project was to create new community-oriented methods for land use and environmental planning. The idea was to support the development of the villages and industrial and commercial activities with those methods. Several different methods were tried, which required community participation. The methods that were used most often and thus gave enough both good and bad experiences are included in table 5 (Kuikka 2004).

Complete planning methods are suitable for the completion of a whole project. Data acquisition methods are used to get background information for planning. With creation methods it is possible to map the possibilities and limits of planning. Evaluation methods serve as the directional and evaluative methods of planning. Methods for decision-making and realization are to take a step forward to realize plans and ideas. Aforementioned methods and their categorization have been used in the "Asu kylässä!" –project. They can be used in different projects as well, but it is has to be remembered that methods must be customized to fit different

planning projects in the best possible ways (Kuikka 2004).

Table 5. Community-centered planning methods used in the “Asu kylässä!” –project.

I Complete planning methods	future workshop planning workshop
II Data acquisition methods	ethnographic observation questionary interview working with maps children's grawings and essays
III Creation methods	"double team" SWOT and pooling methods (*pooli*) adhesive maps (*tarrakartta*) and miniature working
IV Evaluation methods	gåtur (an organized walk) presentation and commentary focus group
V Methods for decision-making and realization	voting practice project sketch model (*hankehahmotelmamalli*) charting of know-how

The regional development unit of Kajaani University Consortium made external evaluation for the “Asu kylässä!” –project. The good and bad practices of the project were listed and described in the evaluation paper and they are introduced following as Table 6 (Ponnikas et al. 2005: 13-14, 42-47):

Table 6. Successful and unsuccessful practices of the “Asu kylässä!” –project.

Successful practices	Unsuccessful practices
good connections to target villages	too many target villages
villager’s interest	target villages too far from each other
commitment to co-operation	unrealistic expectations of target villages
effective project work	there are same villagers who are active
clear outputs and concrete results	municipal employees’ involvement
multidisciplinary cooperation for rural development	limited time for the project
	collaborative learning
	dialogue between disciplines
	financiers’ possible effects

The evaluation paper (Ponnikas et al. 2005: 46) proposed several corrections to the unsuccessful practices, so that future projects would avoid these shortcoming:

- representatives of different disciplines and villagers should plan a common village development model together
- local officers should get motivated through underlining the richness of local knowledge in planning
- public sessions should be organized so that it would be meaningful to take part in them
- new people should be involved in creation and planning
- project should be implemented in a smaller geographical area
- there should be more realizers of the project
- preparing for life after the project should be started already during the planning and the execution of the project.

Villagers' assessments of the project highlighted that the project did not match the villagers' needs sufficiently. Active villagers were interested but still the majority did not participate. That is of course a common problem, which should be targeted – at least in some degree. Used planning methods got, however, positive feedback (Ponnikas et al. 2005: 13).

The personnel of the project "Asu kylässä!" included many students who made their theses and publications in the project. Ponnikas et al. (2005: 12) considered whether interaction between communal officers, university personnel and villagers was too much offloaded on students. That can lead to a situation, where after the project has ended, the villagers won't be engaged in these issues anymore in the future.

7 Social and cultural sustainability in target regions: present and near future

In Finland, sustainable development and sustainability-related issues are already a notable element even in every-day life. Schools, kindergartens, hotels, different organizations and enterprises have their own plans and strategies for sustainable development. What is the quality of the plans and how their goals are implemented is another issue. For some actors these strategies and plans are just necessities, which need to be done, whereas others take them more seriously. In Finland "greenness" and sustainability have a better market value than in the Republic of Karelia or in Russia as a whole. Situation is presumably going to change little by little in Russia as well, and one day "greenness" and sustainability issues might be viewed similarly as they are in Finland now. This attitude change, however, requires plenty of education, information and increased knowledge about environmental issues.

The closeness of Russia is a significant factor Kainuu and North Karelia, which are putting plenty of efforts to utilize this asset in their regions. Russian language and culture are to be taught to locals so that more and more tourists would come to visit in these areas. Especially North Karelia is going to develop the know-how of Russia and Russian language further in the future. Other types of co-operation are also needed between the countries. Social and cultural issues are to be taken into consideration in the collaboration too. Economic growth may not be the only goal. In the Republic of Karelia the proximity of the border is taken widely into account in the development plans for the future as well.

7.1 Oulu region

Oulu region is the most vital and highly developed of the target areas. It is the only target area where population is constantly growing, but this population growth does not come without problems and challenges. One of them is social exclusion. Unemployment is a problem in Oulu region too – as it is probably in all of the target areas. Unemployment rate among the young people is very high, as the region attracts young adults from the rest of Northern Finland. There have been also quite a few lay-offs in different companies in the region. The great number of children and young people are on the other hand one of the assets of the region. The welfare of the young people is one of the goals of the Oulu region in the near future.

The values of the development for 2030 in Oulu region are introduced in the regional plan of Oulu

region. These are communality, accountability, liberality and pluralism, equality, and creativity and courage. The values have a strong social emphasis. They prove that social issues are taken more and more seriously in the development and building of a sustainable future in Oulu region (Pohjois-Pohjanmaan liitto… 2010).

Strategic focuses of Oulu region for future include also cultural, social and rural aspects. The future of Oulu region is seen as a place of strong cultures, where cultural environment is taken care of as well. It should be also a future forerunner in promoting well-being. Rural issues are not forgotten in the regional plan of Oulu region either. Vitality and functionality of the countryside are going to be preserved. Countryside is going to be more and more integrated with regional, national and international development (Pohjois-Pohjanmaan liitto… 2010).

The development of Oulu region is considered to be sustainable, when it is based on various success factors. The ones related to social and cultural development include the following:

- young people with higher education
- diverse know-how and education supply
- the most balanced age structure in Finland
- high-grade cultural life
- multicentered regional structure
- areas with growth ability (Pohjois-Pohjanmaan liitto… 2010).

The vision of Oulu region for 2030 ties up the above mentioned features in a following way (Pohjois-Pohjanmaan liitto… 2010):

"Oulu region is a region of well-being, high-quality environment and diverse nature. It is an accomplished and international enterprise region of dynamic subregions – Oulu being at the head of it as another center of balanced development in Finland."

7.2 Kainuu

Kainuu has faced a heavy depopulation and population ageing as well as economic problems. Thus keeping the region's vitality at the same level future as it is today, is a big challenge. As it was mentioned earlier, Kainuu takes advantage of the closeness of the Russia. Kainuu is marketed as a

"gate to the east". The vision of Kainuu for 2025 includes the strategies, which depict the region in a following way (Kainuun maakunta -kuntayhtymä 2005):

"Kainuu stands for quality of life achieved through know-how, entrepreneurship and cooperation."

The strategic goals, which the region aims to reach in future are (Kainuun maakunta -kuntayhtymä 2005):

- guaranteeing of a good life to the people of Kainuu
- improvement of employment and prevention of social exclusion
- promotion of well-being and health by strengthening pre-emptive action, communality, and people's self-esteem
- improvement of the quality of living and residential environments
- support to spontaneity of local communities and non-governmental organizations

Rural issues are taken into consideration in the regional plan of Kainuu as well. Kainuu's aim is to maintain countryside dynamic and regenerating. The aim is to be reached by

- diversifying the sources of livelihood
- developing the competitiveness of the existing enterprises
- supporting co-operation and networking and improving interaction
- utilizing natural resources of the region sustainably (Kainuun maakunta - kuntayhtymä 2005).

Concrete actions are needed in order that the above listed issues can be realized. Vitality cannot be secured solely by agriculture, but other forms of economic action are needed in increasing amounts as well. These issues are firmly on the agenda, as the new regional plan for the Kainuu region for 2035 is being made at the moment. The new regional plan will be unveiled by the end of 2013.

7.3 North Karelia

North Karelia – like Kainuu – has faced lately same kind of challenges as its more northerly neighbour. The depopulation of the region has led to a downward dependency ratio, which is further accelerated by the ageing of the population. To keep the region vital is going to be a real

challenge in the future, but also North Karelia sees the closeness of Russia as one of its trumps in the future. North Karelia has developed research and education on Russian issues and it aims to be a leading expert in issues connected with Russia in the future. The closeness of the Russian border has been taken into account in the vision of North Karelia for 2030 as well (Pohjois-Karjalan maakuntaliitto… 2010):

"Regenerating and affluent North Karelia is close to nature and a magnetic and international border region."

In the core of the development of North Karelia there are the following aspects:

- entrepreneurship and business know-how
- productization of know-how
- internationalization
- combining of strengths
- atmosphere and ability to co-operate (Pohjois-Karjalan maakuntaliitto… 2010).

The negative effects of the depopulation in Kainuu and North Karelia can somehow be compensated by the Russian tourist flows and part time Russian residents, who own summer houses or other property. Tourists and part time residents are important for the regions in helping to maintain the services at a level, which the diminishing local population alone can't do.

7.4 The Republic of Karelia

In the strategy of socio-economic development of the Republic of Karelia for 2020 (Стратегия… 2007) the role of the Republic as a border region is seen important. The closeness of the EU and the position of the Republic near to (or as a part of) Northern Europe are considered as significant factors for the development of the Republic.

The Republic of Karelia as all the target areas, except Oulu region, suffers from depopulation. People tend to move to the bigger cities of Russia, often to St. Petersburg. Some also move abroad in hope of better quality of life. Unemployment rate of the Republic of Karelia was at the end of 2005 only 3.5 %. Though the unemployment rate is relatively low, the income level is low as well. Human Development Index (HDI) of the Republic faced a clear drop in 2000 as it was 0.732. By

2005 the number had risen to 0.805, which is much better compared with the situation five years earlier (Стратегия… 2007).

Some of the strategic goals of the Republic of Karelia for the near future are (Стратегия… 2007):

- consolidation of the role of Karelian Republic as a border region in the north-west Russia near the Northern Europe and the EU
- modernization of social sphere and development of social capital
- development of civil society and public-private partnership.

Social and cultural aspects are seen as respected parts of the future development. In the strategy of socio-economic development of the Republic of Karelia for 2020 (Стратегия… 2007) it was stated that the main resource of the Republic of Karelia is not the richness of the nature but the people living there, who are creative and generate new ideas. Cultural heritage of Russian peoples and the maintenance of the cultural diversity are regarded as important dimensions of the development.

However, there are and are going to be great challenges in making the cultural and social issues work better and more sustainably. Tynkkynen (2006) writes that there are great challenges in the Republic of Karelia to actualize social objectives that include also the recognition of local knowledge in sustainable development. He argues that the social objectives of sustainable development in regional planning are not likely to be filled in the near future whereas environmental standards might be put into action.

8 Best practices in spatial planning in rural areas

One of the starting points of this report was to find Finnish experiences on spatial and sustainable development issues. Those experiences were to be introduced as best practices to the Republic of Karelia. Examples that could purely be seen as best practices were not found, and there were not examples about rural sustainable planning and development, where everything had worked according to the plans. There were good and bad experiences in each one of them, some of which are introduced later on. In some fields Finnish experiences in sustainable development can be seen as best practices to the Karelian Republic. For example, in material and technological means Finland is ahead of the Republic of Karelia. Sustainability issues are also more widely known and recognized in Finland than in Russia.

There are still many things that can be improved in Finland as well, but the truth is that even to reach the level of the present sustainability level of Finland, plenty of changes and improvements needs to be done in the Republic of Karelia. Thus the Finnish experiences can be seen as examples of both good and bad practices, where bad practices can be used as a warning examples, what not to do, when similar development work and experiments are to be taken in Karelia. There is no need to repeat the same mistakes in, which have been done earlier.

Finland's national regional development targets for 2011-2015 (Ministry of employment and the economy… 2012) include the strengthening of the cooperation between Finland and Russia. In north-western Russia, which includes the Republic of Karelia, there is a strong demand for the renewal of the housing, municipal infrastructure, the water and environmental systems and the traffic infrastructure. This opens up possibilities for Finnish expertise and companies. The development targets prove the presumption that the development in the rural areas of the Republic of Karelia and the rural development in Finnish target regions have not gone hand in hand.

Because of the vagueness and the diversity of the concept "rural" or "countryside", defining or measuring of the "vitality of the countryside" objectively is impossible. However, the vitality of the countryside can be widely connected with the sustainable development (Kuhmonen 1997: 2). People who live in rural areas have distinctive understanding of what is regarded as vital countryside. Basic requirements include the elements of work and income, housing, services,

social structure, mobility and environment, for example. A starting point for the areas struggling with their vitality is to secure the vitality with the area's own strengths and developmental potential. If there is not enough internal capital, external actors can be used (Kuhmonen 1997: 9). Sustainability in rural regions is evaluated partly by the people who live there. The longer people stay there and the better they feel home, the more sustainable a rural community usually is.

The cases, which were introduced earlier – the eco-municipality project in Suomussalmi and the community-planning project "Asu kylässä!" – were both implemented in areas located in the target areas of the GREENSETTLE-project. The eco-municipality experiment "flourished" in the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, whereas the "Asu kylässä!" –project was implemented at the beginning of the 21st century. Both projects included widely dimensions of sustainability. Some of the targets were realized, others not that well. Both projects were forward-looking and even pioneering projects – especially the Suomussalmi eco-municipality project. Projects were thus quite ambitious, which partly explains their shortcomings in regard of the management of the project.

At the beginning of Suomussalmi's eco-municipality project residents of Suomussalmi connected it widely to ecological agriculture, which is just one part of the eco-municipality idea. It took about five years before the inhabitants of the municipality realized that the "membership" of the eco-municipality means that *every inhabitant is responsible for their own behavior and environment*. That was probably the most significant result of the whole project (Heikurainen 1992: 18) as well as the increasing of skills and knowledge of sustainability issues.

Naturally, national and local governances influence people's possibilities to learn of sustainability and act as per se principles of sustainability. In Finland local governance and local people have, on average, more possibilities to influence their own territories' and communities' life and future than in the Republic of Karelia. In the Republic of Karelia waste management is much weaker in sustainable means than, for example, in Finland, and people are not offered the possibility to sort their waste. Decisions for this kind of actions come from above and if governing and decision-making bodies are not eager to do decisions towards more sustainable lifestyle, people are not motivated to act sustainably. Communities must be respected and given the possibility to participate in decision-making processes.

The local government of Suomussalmi supported the eco-municipality idea right from the start. However, it was found out that the eco-municipality cannot be realized just by decisions taken at the local council or local government, if the inhabitants of the municipality are not involved in the execution of the project. Business sector did really endorse the project, and the lack of interest towards the eco-municipality idea and its publicity values was regarded as a big disappointment (Heikurainen 1992: 17-18).

It seems that Suomussalmi did not reach the objectives of an eco-municipality in the best possible way – at least in the first 10 or something years. Ecologically grown products were not popular, business people did not recognize the importance of the sustainable thinking (and its market value) and stakeholders had difficulties in making common decisions. Hence the life in Suomussalmi in the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s seems not to have been very successful in sustainable terms.

However, in some other fields project was successful and, for instance, the municipality-led projects proved to be a success. Also village action was said to have been a good development sector (Malinen 1992: 22). All in all, the empowering of the people in different projects and exercises was seen as the most successful practices in the eco-municipality project. As it was mentioned earlier, it makes no sense to make big decisions toward a sustainable life if the residents of the region are not involved in the operations and development.

Eco-municipality experiment has gradually faded into history in Suomussalmi. The first ten years or so saw the most active development phase. Today even the word eco-municipality (*ekokunta* in Finnish) cannot be found on the websites of Suomussalmi. In the 1980s and 1990s, as the eco-municipality experiment "flourished", ecological thinking was not yet a popular or valued trend. From those times the ecological thinking and practices resulted from it have become more common since then and even a self-explanatory part of the life in Finland. However, in the Republic of Karelia and elsewhere in Russia the situation is pretty much the same or even worse right now as it was in Finland back in the period of the Suomussalmi eco-municipality experiment. In the Republic of Karelia people are not yet very familiar with the more ecological lifestyle and it has not gained the respect it has received little by little in Finland.

Aim of the "Asu kylässä!" –project was to create approaches to new community-centered planning

culture by different kinds of participatory planning methods. Key words of the project included interaction, creativity, exchange of information, respecting of different views, collaboration and learning from each other (Kuikka 2004: 78). “Asu kylässä!” –project was a much shorter project than the Suomussalmi eco-municipality project, but most likely it produced more positive outcomes than the experiment of Suomussalmi.

Most of the inhabitants of the target villages of the “Asu kylässä!” –project saw that the project was advantageous and rose from the needs of the inhabitants of the target areas. However, as it was mentioned above (Table 6), the geographical area of the project was seen to be too large and collaboration between different stakeholders who were involved in the process did not work as had been planned. Some other strengths and weaknesses were mentioned earlier. The “Asu kylässä!” -project ended in 2004 and the evaluation paper on the project was published next year. The evaluation of the project was made immediately after the project had ended. Almost ten years have passed since the project ended and it would be interesting to see what is the situation of the participatory approaches in the target villages today. At the end of the project the stakeholders of the villages were willing to work also in the future (Ponnikas et al. 2005). Has this really happened?

There were many positive outcomes and results that were generated by the two projects presented earlier. However, many things could have been done better. In both projects, the most successful actions were probably the engagement of the local people and the increasing of the knowledge of ecological and sustainable communities. Of course there were many people who did not participate in the projects at all, but the strength of the projects really was the engagement of the villagers and local people. Some of the initiatives, like the ecological agriculture, did not succeed because of the wrong timing. Some did not work out because of the lack of money or marketing as it happened in the cases of ecologically produced agriculture products and the ecotourism village plan in the Suomussalmi eco-municipality experiment.

Unfortunately, the outcome of the briefly introduced Ecovillages-project is not known yet, because the project is still carried out. It will probably provide useful information about ecovillages and green settlements that are of the interest for the GREENSETTLE –project.

9 Recommendation for sustainable development in rural areas

Target areas of the GREENSETTLE-project are quite different – especially when comparing Oulu region and the Karelian Republic. All the target areas have different strengths and weaknesses, though there is much in common too. Rural regions were in the focus of this report. The development of rural areas has to be taken into account, when towns and cities are being developed. Rural areas have to retain their vitality as well. One of the most significant problems in the rural areas of the target regions is depopulation.

One theory of migration is the so called "push-pull theory". "Push-pull" here means that underdeveloped and sparsely populated areas push people to areas that are better developed. At the national level this thinking leads us to consider correlation models of centers and peripheries. Peripheries are dependent on centers especially in economic and political terms (Antikainen 2001: 91). In all the target areas depopulation of the rural areas can be seen as a problem. Population concentrates in urban areas and only in Oulu region the total population has been increasing lately. To prevent the out-migration from the rural areas and the target areas as a whole, sustainability issues can give useful tools to develop rural areas toward higher functionality and attractiveness.

To increase the number of people living in rural areas is not a simple task. There are some issues that have to be taken care of before the increase is really possible: increasing of the attraction of rural areas, high enough income level, sufficiently good services and possibilities to the social contacts and good quality of the environment. Especially important it is to find the actions based on the area's own resources and not to trust so much in measures of support (Väänänen 1980).

In the websites of International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP) there is Jill Jäger's article "2050 – A Vision for Our Planet", which was first published in the IGBP's Global Change magazine (iss. 74, Dec 2009 / Jan 2010). In the article Jäger writes about the future of the Earth and aspects that have to be reached for the future to be good and sustainable for everyone in any part of the world. Short extracts from the article are written below.

"In 2050, the nine billion people living on Earth have found a way to manage the planetary system effectively. Hunger and poverty have been eliminated. Everyone has access to adequate food, clothing, housing, healthcare, education, energy, clean water and sanitation. - -

In 2050, everyone participates fully in society and has equal opportunities. - - Ecological awareness is an integral part of the education system. People respond effectively to social and environmental hazards and societies care and provide for the most vulnerable amongst them.

A vision for our planet includes different aspects of life. Some of the aspects are to be met in the target areas of this project, but some are partly or entirely not.

When thinking of the Republic of Karelia based on the vision, there is still much to be done. Hunger is not a big problem in those regions, but poverty is a familiar phenomenon in the rural areas of the Republic of Karelia – partly because of the low income level of the region. Everyone has access to adequate clothing and food at least. "Adequate" can be understood in many ways. In some measures people in the Republic of Karelia also have adequate housing, healthcare, education, energy, clean water and sanitation conditions – there are sites where even these needs might not be fulfilled – but there are many things that could be done to make those conditions better. In the Republic of Karelia the most important development issues in the near future relate to those aforementioned things.

Though in the Finnish target areas all the basic needs have been supplied, there is still much room to improve especially in achieving full participation of people. In 2050, at the latest, the things mentioned in the vision should be fulfilled in all the target areas of the GREENSETTLE-project, because the target areas are already a part of the developed world and the vision concerns also the less developed parts of the world.

Rural Policy Committee of Finland has formulated the *Vision of the Finnish countryside for 2020* (Maaseutupolitiikan yhteistyöryhmä... 2009). The vision is translated below.

There is plenty to be done so that the vision would come true in Finland. All the elements are

there but the finishing touches are needed. If the vision above is going to be reached by 2020 in Finland, on the Russian side of the border the attainment of the same kind of vision would be at least a couple of decades more. If the same vision was reached by 2040-2050 in the Republic of Karelia, it would probably be a good achievement and even a realistic schedule.

Countryside is a multiform and respected part of the Finnish society. Space, spacious housing and local solutions are used as the source of well-being and the base of sustainable development. The society secures the basic structures of living and working in the countryside and supports people's spontaneous development work. People, communities and companies of the countryside are doing well and the social interaction, the state of environment and the competitiveness have got better profiting the whole society at the same time. International connections of the actors have substantially increased.

The Republic of Karelia has faced many changes in political, environmental and structural means during the last century and especially after the Second World War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Particularly the closing of the *kolkhozes* and transition from socialist system towards privatization has brought about challenges. Political situation and a leading political power can have an enormous influence in the development of a region.

In the Republic of Karelia the biggest problem is probably the way of thinking. Sustainability issues are not taken that seriously as they should be. Regional and national policies play a role in that kind of thinking and development though. All the elements for the sustainable development exist both in Finnish and Russian target areas but in the Republic of Karelia the social dimensions of sustainability needs more attention.

As all the "basic needs" have been met, social issues gain importance. "Everyone participates fully in society and has equal opportunities" – that part of the vision is probably the hardest one to realize. Most likely it is impossible to gain full participation and provide equal opportunities for all, but those goals are to be aimed at. In the Finnish target areas that part of the vision is on agenda.

In rural areas social environment and social ties are important and those are the things that are missed when living in towns and cities. One significant reason for the dissatisfaction of people in

urban areas is that people lack the influence in planning and creating their own living environment (Väänänen 1980). In addition to basic needs as food, clothes, housing etc. social networks and cultures where to identify are essential for people's well-being. Unfortunately cultures and cultural issues were not separately mentioned in the two visions mentioned above.

In Table 7 there are practices that will have positive impacts to (rural) areas and their inhabitant's well-being in the projects related to sustainable development. Practices are based on both good and bad experiences of the Finnish case studies that were described earlier. By implementing these good practices in projects, it should be possible to reach positive outcomes.

Table 7. Things to be done and taken into consideration before, during and after implementing a project, which is related to sustainable development issues.

BEFORE	Explain the concepts of e.g. *sustainable development / eco-community / ecological agriculture* properly to different stakeholders before starting to implement projects based on these concepts.
	Governing and decision-making bodies need to be willing for changes – otherwise nothing is going to happen.
	Development targets need to originate from the needs of the local people.
	Make local people understand that everyone is responsible for their own behavior and environment.
	Projects can be ambitious, but they have to be realistic. That way projects are more likely to succeed.
DURING	Utilize of own potential and resources of a region as much as possible.
	Strengthening of the collaboration with nearby regions is reasonable so that strengths and expertise of different kind can be utilized.
	Involve the local people in the development, planning and decision-making processes.
	Collaboration between different stakeholders has to be interactive.
	Keep the geographical area small enough when implementing a project - too large areas may lead to problems.
	People need to recognize the value of the sustainable thinking.
AFTER	Projects have to have far-reaching goals and plans that have a positive influence in a region even after the implementation of a project.
	Project is successful when people are willing to pull together to develop their region further in the future.

10 Conclusions

Economy is often seen as the most significant matter in development. It might not be seen so, but however "money matters" though we would not admit that. Environmental issues have been taken seriously for some time too. There are many practices to save the environment, but not so many to save cultural aspects, especially the intangible ones of them. Social dimensions have started to be taken into account lately too – particularly in community engagement processes.

To reach a complete development of a region, inhabitants need to be satisfied. Well-being should thus be one of the most important objectives of development processes. Economic growth is not sufficient to guarantee well-being. The social and cultural aspects of development are extremely important as well. Participation possibilities and the "sense of belonging somewhere" are significant actors that make people enjoy and stay where they live.

Rural regions have been the target of this report. There are many positive aspects in the rural life, but also those that are in a poor state. Rural areas offer a lot of space to live and to refresh oneself. Recreational and cultural values are considered important and worth of developing. People living in rural areas are quite active and interactive, and they are interested (and concerned) of the region they live in. Thus people may have high competences in local matters, that is, a strong local knowledge. Local knowledge should never be undervalued but taken seriously in the decision-making processes.

Problems of the rural areas vary from region to region, but the greatest problems in the target regions of the GREENSETTLE-project are depopulation and the lack of labor and/or jobs, lack of infrastructure and vanishing services. Depopulation is a problem in all of the target regions. The lack of basic infrastructure brings about challenges especially in the Republic of Karelia. In Finland the basic infrastructural needs are fulfilled but, for example, the level of the telecommunications networks is not as high in all of the rural areas as it is in urban areas.

The most demanding challenge is to sustain the vitality of the rural regions. All the aforementioned elements influence the vitality. A narrow economic structure makes it increasingly difficult to keep a region vital. In rural areas agriculture has traditionally been the most important livelihood, but in future developing other livelihoods becomes a key issue. In some

regions there are forest industries and nowadays also mining industries that create jobs. Rural regions offer good possibilities particularly for primary production. Service sector, on average, decreases in rural areas but tourism gives there many possibilities to widen service sector in recreational, spiritual and cultural fields. Current problematic issue in rural areas is the elderly care. The population in rural areas (and elsewhere as well) gets older all the time. The elderly care will need labor and accommodation and other investments more and more in the near future. That is going to be a true challenge.

The Finnish case studies “Asu kylässä!” and Suomussalmi eco-municipality –projects became familiar in this report. There were successful and unsuccessful practices in both of the projects. Unsuccessful practices are to be avoided in the similar projects in the future. Yet some of the failures might have occurred just because of wrong timing or lack of money as it was mentioned earlier. Thus every single practice needs to be assessed and it has to be considered if there are in the moment of the planned implementation of a project all the requisite elements like money, right timing, knowledge and sufficiently involved participants.

The hope is that things written in this report would give ideas and probably even advice toward the complete sustainable planning, which takes not only economic and environmental issues into consideration but also the social and cultural aspects of development.

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