

Speech by:

Tarmo Jomppanen

Museum Director of Siida Sámi Museum, Inari, Finland
Yellowknife

The greatest attractions in the tourism of Northern Finland are nature and culture, especially the Sámi culture. The symbols of Lapland are reindeer and Sámi. Sámi people have not had a chance to influence Lapland's travelling industry although they've been portrayed as its mascots for decades. The proportion of the Sámi in tourism still remains very small.

Municipalities of the North invest in developing tourism an extremely lot because at the moment it is almost the only source of livelihood that is still able to grow. Increase in production, with regards to reindeer management and especially forestry, is not great but quite the opposite. It can also be profitable for the Sámi to develop tourism as an addition to their traditional sources of livelihood. However, certain principles concerning this development work must exist. The Sámi Parliament of Finland has already had to consider those principles when they produced a report of the Sámi in travelling industry in the beginning of this year.

A great deal of Lapland's tourism is sold by the image of unspoiled nature and its peace and quiet. When tourism is developed, it must be continuously kept in mind that if the industry is developed too much the real trump cards are in danger to disappear. It is essential to find a balance and avoid mass tourism in Northern travelling industry. The same can be applied to culture tourism. Tourism can also ruin the local culture. In itself, tourism can be the worst threat to tourism.

The fact is that one of the developing sectors of tourism in Lapland is culture tourism. The Sámi culture has been made into products in many ways, earlier also mistakenly. The worst example of this is the so called 'Lappish baptism'. That is connected to the ceremony of crossing the Polar circle in which a person who reminds a Sámi shaman (noaidi), though usually a non- Sámi himself, baptizes the tourist. The ritual itself has no points of origin in the Sámi culture but certain features such as the manner of speaking, stories told as well as clothing give the impression to visitors that all that belongs to a holy ceremony related to Sámi culture.

Nowadays there already exist some Sámi enterprises that run culture related programme services. Whether a person is a Sámi or someone else producing culture related programme services there are always problematic and ethically dubious things involved – things that, supposedly, will be discussed today. I will raise an up-to-date example of this from the Sámi area.

The Lapland Regional Environment Centre has, this summer, started an EU-supported project "Know your cultural surroundings in Lapland". In this project, an inventory will be made of all the cultural surroundings of the county of Lapland. A special item of the cultural heritage of the Sámi, concerning the Sámi area, will also be compiled. One of the goals of the project is to make an advantage of it in culture tourism for example.

"By developing culture tourism also those areas that have no preconditions for practicing large-

scale travelling industry can be influenced in a way that their vitality can be preserved”.

Besides making an inventory of buildings, tradition such as persons, site names and events concerning individual places will be collected. For example, in this way, information of some family’s old sacrificial site that has been kept a secret can be acquired.

Out of the information acquired by the inventory – what is public?

What, out of that information, can be used to the advantage of travelling industry?

Who is allowed to use that information?

Is indigenous knowledge freely and commercially exploited?

The Sámi Parliament has to express their opinion on these matters before finishing the project.

Developing the Sami travelling industry

From the viewpoint of the Sámi Parliament, the starting point for developing the Sámi travelling industry has to be the Sámi standpoint. Apart from the profitability (of entrepreneurship), environment and culture is paid attention to. In addition, it must be taken care of that the traditional means of livelihood will not give way to tourism and preconditions of practicing them will not be limited. Tourism has to be based on authentic and real information of the Sámi culture. Succeeding in this, the development work in tourism can even protect and improve culture.

An authentic Sámi product in tourism should stand out from the other corresponding products. In fact, it has been proposed that a trademark in Sámi travelling industry is needed. A corresponding trademark is already in use in Sámi handicrafts (Sámi Duodji). That mark guarantees an authentic handicraft. Development of such a trade mark in travelling industry again raises many questions.

What are the criteria for granting a trade mark?

Who grants it?

Is it given by the grounds of origin or is a certain quality standard demanded?

Should we really talk about a quality system?

It is most worrying that already more than half of Finland’s Sámi minority lives outside the Sámi territory. Developing tourism and integrating it into the Sámi means of livelihood is one way of

improving the possibilities of livelihood in one’s own, native place.