

## The Role of Consumer in Saving the Cultural Landscape in the Countryside

Leena Savisalo\*

### Abstract

Our environment is depending on the human activity. Its impacts are often unpredictable and deeply interdependent. Resistance for change among the inhabitants and other parties involved is reduced by participation and information throughout the planning. In the financial, technological, environmental and social points of view the changes in cultural landscape are to fix together. The 2000 Land Use and Building Act in Finland has given more opportunities to the citizen, in other words consumer of his or her living surrounding.

The purpose of the study is to observe and to evaluate participation in the land use process and the potential of civil activity in influencing the impacts of planning in the cultural landscape in the countryside.

The program is a part of Social Impact Assessment (SIA) that is one of the programs in communal land use planning. The information collected from the people is one part of improving the welfare in the living area. The new legislation has directed the authorities to give the inhabitants and other actors a more active role in the process and in this way bring long term sustainability and acceptability into planning.

The Act on Environmental Impact Assessment Procedure was passed in 1994 according to the EU directive 85/377/EEC from the year 1988. Finland has signed the ECE general agreement of the environmental impact influenced over the national borders. Apart from the environmental impact the research of the social impact has become more accurate. The civil involvement in the land use development is new issue after the passing of new legislation. The new activity of inhabitants is thought to reach the official communal and regional authorities.

"The regulations and rules have transformed into the learning of organisations, women organisations and extension in rural areas focusing on co-management, multi-stakeholder approaches and long term pro-active change" (Magnus Ljung, SLU, Sweden). The co-operation between farmers and other professionals in rural areas in order to increase social wellbeing beside environmental welfare is notable.

The mechanisation of the farm work, the decrease in number of farms and the bigger size of farms is leading to the need of better information to influence the living area. The population is quickly decreasing in many parts of Finland. At the same time the Southern areas of Finland are wondering how to plan sustainable long term welfare to the new consumers in the previous land available for building. Now the newcomers must settle down into the empty building reserves. In the Northern parts of the country problem is how to keep the land vivid and in the new suburb the problem is the same.

The study questions are: 1) What is the present situation and attitudes for landscape in the population. 2) The official vision of the communities' authority 3) The point of view of

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\* MSc. Helsinki University, Finland. Ms Leena Savisalo is a post graduate student in Consumer Economics (prof Visa Heinonen) and Extension (prof Harri Westermarck) at Helsinki University, Finland. <leena.savisalo@helsinki.fi>

temporary population (summer / and other holiday makers) 4) The vision of new service based professionals (tourism, machine contracting or other side line entrepreneurship in the farm) in the countryside and in the new city suburb.

The Environmental and Social Impact Assessments are used direct evaluate the welfare of the inhabitants in the rural and semi rural areas. The extension and advisory quarters are significant in disseminating the multilevel knowledge. The results are neutral and possible to use without prejudice. The IT technology and media is supposed to extend the research to the consumers who are the opinion leaders and the decision makers in the working level.

## See

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Soini, Katriina, (1999). Ympäristöinformaatio ja viljelijä. Näkökulmia tiedolliseen ohjaukseen. (Environmental Information and the Farmer. An Approach to the Knowledge Extension). Maatalouden tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisu. Sarja B 21. ISBN 951-729-546-4. Jokioinen. 31p.