

Decoding Differences in Nature Park Visitors' Experience

The Case of Pyhä-Luosto National Park

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This article aims to explore the discourse construction through the institutional apparatus and technologies within Pyhä-Luosto National Park, one of the first two national parks established in Finland, by analysing visitors' reviews. This article investigates the causes behind the differing levels of emphasis that tourists of various languages (Finnish and other languages) and cultural backgrounds place on environmental values or physical activities during their visits. By employing a mixed-methods approach, merging quantitative (frequency analysis) and qualitative (discourse analysis) methodologies, the analysis reveals a distinct divergence in the visitor experiences of the national park based on the background of visitors. Finnish-speaking visitors exhibit a stronger preference for landscape, while international visitors emphasize the experiences derived from physical activities. Through a closer field study in Pyhä-Luosto National Park, it is proposed that these differences originate from distinct cultural contexts and environmental engagements that shape each visitor's interaction with the natural landscape.

Keywords: *national park, landscape, experience, discourse, apparatus*



Since the establishment of its first batch of national parks in 1938, Finland has been at the crossroads of balancing natural conservation with touristic objectives for nearly a century. Over the past decades, national parks in Finland have oscillated between being preserved natural areas and tourist destinations, gradually realizing sustainable-development-based tourism economic goals¹. Meanwhile, growing research has approached national parks as visual, discursive, and meaning-making spaces, perceiving national parks as not merely isolated natural entities, but also conceptual spaces intricately embedded in social, cultural, economic, and political matrices². This perspective suggests that the creation and representation of national parks is inevitably mediated and conditioned by a myriad of factors including, but not limited to, technological advancements, economic imperatives, aesthetic values, and prevailing discourses, which play a crucial role in knowledge production, shaping visitors' experiences and expectations, influencing policy decisions, and even contributing to the construction of national identity.

Here, the discussion of discourse is mainly inspired by Michel Foucault's interest in discourse and the production of knowledge. I perceive discourse as a set of statements, practices, and institutional structures that define and regulate what can be thought, said, and done within a

particular context or field. It suggests that our interactions with the world are not merely determined by what we see or do. They are also profoundly influenced by the underlying discourses, the "thought structures" that shape our perceptions and guide our actions.

In national parks, discourse plays a pivotal role in crafting the narratives and in defining the nature of our encounters with them. Recent studies have increasingly focused on the interactive dynamics between the discursive functions and visual interpretations of national parks. For instance, Mels examined Swedish national parks, exploring how these parks are communicated and legitimized through multimedia visual technologies and various spatial strategies³. Focusing also on Swedish national parks, Fälton discussed how the non-human world is produced visually and how knowledge of nature operates through the installations in national parks⁴. In research related to other Nordic and Baltic countries, Anu Printsman and others highlighted the role of landscape in shaping national identity and collective memory, revealing how landscapes in Finland, Estonia, and Latvia reflect their distinctive histories, cultural narratives, and sociopolitical contexts⁵. Additionally, extensive studies have been conducted in the United States, like Grusin's work, which delved into the intricate relationship between capturing natural beauty and recognizing the inherent loss and transformation in landscapes and cultures,

1 Riikka Puhakka, "Increasing Role of Tourism in Finnish National Parks," *Fennia - International Journal of Geography* 186, no. 1 (2008): 47–58.

2 Juha Hiedanpää and Lasse Lovén, "Making the National Landscape: The Case of Koli, Eastern Finland," in *Landscapes of Affect and Emotion: Nordic Environmental Humanities and the Emotional Turn*, eds. Maunu Häyrynen, Jouni Häkli, and Jarkko Saarinen (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2022); Riikka Puhakka and Jarkko Saarinen, "New Role of Tourism in National Park Planning in Finland," *The Journal of Environment & Development* 22, no. 4 (December 2013): 411–34; Teijo Rytteri and Riikka Puhakka, "The Art of Neoliberalizing Park Management: Commodification, Politics and Hotel Construction in Pallasylästunturi National Park, Finland," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 94, no. 3 (September 2012): 255–68.

3 Tom Mels, "Nature, Home, and Scenery: The Official Spatialities of Swedish National Parks," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 20, no. 2 (April 2002): 135–54; Tom Mels, "Wild Landscapes: The Cultural Nature of Swedish National Parks" (PhD diss., Lund University, 1999).

4 Emelie Fälton, "Descendants of the Modernist Museum: Tracing the Musealisation of Swedish National Parks," *Visual Studies* 38, no. 1 (1 January 2023): 81–100.

5 Anu Printsman et al., "Landscape 100: How Finland, Estonia and Latvia Used Landscape in Celebrating Their Centenary Anniversaries," *European Countryside* 11, no. 2 (1 June 2019): 187–210.



particularly through the lens of preservation and representation in Yellowstone⁶.

However, few existing studies examine the interplay between discursive representations and visitors' embodied experiences in national parks, especially in Finland and other Nordic countries. Moreover, the potential influence of visitors' linguistic and cultural backgrounds on their experience and understanding of natural spaces remains largely unexplored. Given the increasing internationalization of tourism and the diversity of visitors to Finnish national parks, this gap in understanding becomes even more pertinent.

Pyhä-Luosto National Park, located in the Lapland region, introduced additional layers of cultural and semiotic complexity. Belonging to the first batch of national parks established in Finland, it was one of the only two parks remaining in the country after World War II, as the rest no longer belonged to Finland⁷. "Pyhä" in Finnish means "sacred" or "holy", and this park is home to numerous cultural and historical sites imbued with sacred significance. Certain unique natural landscapes and terrains within the park still carry spiritual values nowadays.⁸ On the one hand, the natural landscape in Pyhä-Luosto National Park is deeply intertwined with the culture and lifestyle of the Sámi people. It is worth noting that while vast regions in the Sámi homeland have been officially recognized

as wilderness areas, national parks or strict nature reserves, these regions encompass sites and expansive landscapes that hold immense cultural significance for the Sámi community.⁹ There remains controversy over whether certain areas should be designated as natural sacred sites for the Sámi people. On the other hand, this national park boasts distinctive Arctic landscapes, geographical features, and activities, reflecting a unique interplay of natural and cultural influences. The park's identity is not merely defined by the unique Arctic landscapes nor the rich ancient culture; rather, it is the dynamic relationship between various environmental and ethnological discourses that enriches its character.

This study aligns with recent scholarship that sees national parks as discursive spaces and meaningful landscapes rather than mere physical locations¹⁰. This article proposes to answer: how do the institutional apparatus and technologies employed in Pyhä-Luosto National Park influence the experiences and perceptions of domestic and international visitors differently? I will start with the comments from tourists on their visiting experiences, and investigate how the naturalistic discourse and display techniques in Pyhä-Luosto National Park operate. The aim of this article is to understand why this national park produces different effects on tourists from various cultural backgrounds.

Material and Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods research approach, utilizing both quantitative

6 Richard A. Grusin, "Representing Yellowstone: Photography, Loss, and Fidelity to Nature," *Configurations* 3, no. 3 (1995): 415–36.

7 Minttu Perttula, *Suomen kansallispuistojärjestelmän kehittyminen 1960–1990-luvuilla ja U.S. National Park Servicen vaikutukset puistojen hoitoon* (Vantaa, Ivalo: Metsähallitus, 2006).

8 Rauno Väisänen, "Diversity of sacred lands and meanings in Northern Europe: Challenges for the managers of protected areas," in *The Diversity of Sacred Lands in Europe. Proceedings of the Third Workshop of the Delos Initiative–Inari/Aanaar*, eds. Jose-Maria Mal-larach, Thymios Papagiannēs, and Rauno Väisänen, 205-216. Gland: IUCN, 2012.

9 Väisänen, "Diversity of sacred lands and meanings in Northern Europe," 208.

10 Kristi S. Lekies and Bernadette Whitworth, "Constructing the Nature Experience: A Semiotic Examination of Signs on the Trail," *The American Sociologist* 42, no. 2–3 (September 2011): 249–60; Richard A. Grusin, *Culture, Technology, and the Creation of America's National Parks* (Cambridge, UK; New York, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Mels, "Nature, home and scenery."

(word-frequency analysis) and qualitative (discourse analysis) methodologies. The two methods are used to analyze two types of empirical materials: comments from Google Reviews and ethnographic data collected from my fieldwork in Pyhä-Luosto National Park.

For the qualitative study, my approach to discourse analysis is both incorporation and modification of Michel Foucault's concepts. Foucault was reluctant to explicitly define a research method, as he tended to keep the openness to the post-structural undecidability. Rather than strictly adhering to his methods, I adapt and apply his theoretical distinction between "institutional apparatus" and "institutional technologies", corresponding respectively to the handling of rules, laws, the production of knowledge about national parks, and the pervasive management of bodily experiences within the park.

According to Foucault, institutions operate through two distinct yet interconnected means: their apparatus and their technologies¹¹. The institutional apparatus consists of elements like "discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions", while the apparatus itself is "the system of relations that can be established between these elements"¹². In other words, the apparatus can be perceived as the infrastructure of power and knowledge that characterizes the institutions themselves. It encompasses an array of elements, from physical architecture to regulatory measures, from scientific theses to philosophical assertions, laws, ethics, and so forth. Furthermore, the apparatus always serves a specific strategic purpose, and is invariably situated within a power dynamic.

11 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

12 Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. and trans. Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), 194.

Overall, it refers to methods and procedures for managing humans. Based on Foucault's descriptions of this concept, I define apparatus as the interactive system between discourses, laws, conceptual tools and structures that shape the management of an institution.

Institutional technologies, while occasionally challenging to distinguish from the apparatus, are the practical techniques employed to exercise power. Unlike the apparatus, technologies are "diffuse", scarcely articulated in a continuous, coherent discourse. Instead, they often comprise "bits and pieces", forming a varied set of tools and methods¹³. It is the mechanism or strategy embedded in institutions and their practices that enables the exertion of power and control over individuals and groups. They can be subtle or overt, influencing human behavior, thought, and interaction. They facilitate the creation, reproduction, and maintenance of certain discourses, shaping the way people understand, engage with, and participate in social, political, and cultural life.

In national parks, I delimit the institutional apparatus with the park's policies, management strategies, and constructed narratives about nature and conservation, while the institutional technologies could refer to the practical techniques used within these spaces, such as signages, trails, and visitor programs, which shape visitor behaviors and experiences in more subtle and practical ways. We can understand the institutional apparatus and technologies of the national parks as tools of governance that shape visitors' behavior and perceptions. They represent different aspects of power, with the institutional apparatus focused on the creation and dissemination of knowledge, and the institutional technologies on the regulation of physical behavior and experience.

13 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

The differentiation between apparatus and technologies in the park provides an analytical perspective for understanding data. The forms of power and knowledge in the national park, represented as the discourses and narratives conveyed through text and imagery, can affect visitors of different cultural backgrounds in various ways, leading to noticeable differences in data. For example, some sites, by narrating specific historical events, have created “sacred” national spaces, forging inseparable links between nation and territory. These narratives often profoundly impact domestic visitors, as they evoke national identity through collective memory. Guiding technologies, in contrast, have a more direct influence on physical experiences. The guidance technologies in the park likely exert a more tangible influence on the physical movements and engagements of visitors. This can be particularly evident in how different groups navigate and interact with the park’s spaces, potentially leading to varied patterns in the quantitative data collected.

Therefore, during my fieldwork in Pyhä-Luosto National Park, I focused on the small exhibition at the Naava Visitor Center and the introductory texts within, which provide basic information about the park’s natural and cultural features, and specific narrating strategies for constructing the park’s image. Through discourse analysis, I specifically examined the discursive formation of these texts. I also collected the various techniques used within the park for guiding and managing the actions of visitors, such as the park’s maps, signs, and trails, and investigated how these elements effectively guide visitor movement, ensure safety, and minimize the impact on the natural environment.

As for the quantitative research, I collected the user-generated content posted on Google Reviews about Pyhä-Luosto National Park, and conducted a word-frequency analysis. This method enabled systematically identifying keywords and phrases, reducing the textual data

to manageable, categorizable themes. Counting the occurrence of certain words or themes helps quantify the data, providing a numerical basis for comparison across different categories. Word-frequency analysis is practicable for discovering patterns and identifying dominant themes in a large dataset¹⁴. It provides a comprehensive overview of the most common themes or terms that emerge from the mined text and highlights the dominant narratives present within the reviews. Besides, it suggests that the frequency of certain words or phrases in texts can provide insights into the patterns of thought or behavior among a group of people. In this context, high-frequency words in the reviews can provide insights into the experiences that stand out most for the visitors of the parks.

Google Reviews provides an open platform that is publicly accessible, and its data can be easily extracted for research purposes. This is largely due to the public nature of the reviews – when users decide to leave a review, they understand that their comments will be publicly visible. Besides, as one of the most widely used platforms for reviewing various services and destinations, Google Reviews attracts a diverse range of users from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which is crucial for this research. The large number of reviews available ensured a substantial amount of data for each group, thereby enabling a more robust analysis.

For the processing of the data, I first collected comments in Finnish and other languages separately, saving them in two distinct documents. Then I used Google Translator to uniformly translate the non-Finnish comments into English. After this, I utilized Word Counter (<https://wordcounter.ai/>) for a preliminary frequency analysis of both documents. Upon excluding

14 Jean-Baptiste Michel et al., “Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books,” *Science* 331, no. 6014 (14 January 2011): 176–82; Ioan-Ioviț Popescu and Gabriel Altmann, *Word Frequency Studies* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009).

grammatical words (such as “and”, “is”, etc.) I aggregated the frequencies of the same vocabulary in different forms¹⁵, ultimately identifying the top 10 most frequent Finnish words and 20 foreign language words. The decision to record 20 foreign words stems from the smaller sample size of non-Finnish vocabulary. Compared to Finnish comments, there is a smaller variation in frequency among these words, so a larger sample size promotes providing readers with a more comprehensive understanding of these comments.

A noteworthy aspect of this process is the treatment of reviews in other languages, such as Swedish, German, French and so forth. For these reviews, despite the potential inaccuracies that might emerge from this method¹⁶, it was chosen due to a couple of considerations. On the one hand, the primary objective was to conduct a comparative analysis of the Finnish language reviews with those in other languages. Translating all non-Finnish reviews into English facilitated this process, allowing for a more direct comparison of the themes and patterns observed across different cultural and linguistic contexts. While Google Translate might not perfectly capture the nuances of each language, it provides a practical solution for handling large volumes of data in multiple languages. On the other hand, the use of machine translation in this context is reflective of a broader trend in the digital era, where language translation tools are increasingly used to navigate the multilingual internet landscape. This approach is a nod to

15 For example, “hyvä”, “hyvät”, “hyvää” and so forth. I also tried to search for “hyv*” in the text document, but this method would include adverbs of degree, such as “hyvin” in some contexts meaning “very”, which is not entirely consistent with “good”. Therefore, when calculating these words, I also examined their meanings in context.

16 Harold Somers, “Machine Translation: History, Development, and Limitations,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. Kirsten Malmkjær and Kevin Windle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

this reality and a recognition of the role these tools play in shaping our understanding of digital discourse. By using Google Translate, I was able to simulate the experience of an international visitor trying to understand reviews in a foreign language, thereby adding another layer of authenticity to the study. However, it is important to recognize that this methodology, while practical and reflective of certain digital realities, carries certain limitations. Translation, especially machine translation, can sometimes fail to capture cultural nuances and idiosyncrasies of language, potentially leading to some level of data distortion. Nevertheless, in this research, the objective is to seek approximate values, wherein the assignment involves attributing meaning or interpretation to diverse themes. It primarily concerns the relational disparities among the groups. Given the objective of this study to uncover broader thematic and relational trends rather than precise linguistic accuracies, within the context of potential translation bias, the level of distortion encountered is deemed tolerable and does not significantly detract from the overall validity of the findings.

Empirical Findings from Quantitative Analysis

In handling the collected Google reviews, I executed a two-step analysis. To begin with, I examined the 1032 reviews, out of which 390 had comments and 254 were in Finnish. After excluding grammatical words, a frequency count was carried out on the 10 most frequently repeated words in the reviews (table 1).

It is important to note that the Finnish language, like many other languages, can express complex ideas and emotions with unique words and phrases, which may not have direct equivalents in other languages. Therefore, during the statistical analysis, I retained the Finnish words while also providing English translations. Each word and phrase was translated and interpreted

Words	Meaning	Frequency count
maisema	landscape	65
hyvä	good	64
paikka	place	54
upea	great	40
mahtava	grand	27
kaunis	beautiful	25
reitti	route	22
luonto	nature	17
hieno	fine	14
latu	ski track	14

Table 1. List of the 10 most frequent words in reviews of Pyhä-Luosto National Park written in Finnish.

as carefully as possible, in order to fully capture the essence of the original language.

During the second phase of the analysis, I applied the same statistical procedures to the non-Finnish language reviews. I uniformly employed Google Translate to convert them into English before conducting the statistical analysis (table 2.).

As a comparative study, I also collected reviews for another national park in Lapland – the Pallas-Yllästunturin National Park, one of the country’s first and most significant natural reserves – and performed the same operation (table 3 and 4).

The most frequently used words of domestic visitors suggest a strong appreciation for the natural features and aesthetic qualities of both parks, particularly the landscapes (“maisema”), which is the top-mentioned aspect in both parks. Additionally, while words like “upea” (great),

Words	Frequency count
beautiful	37
place	32
great	27
nice	24
hike	23
park	22
ski	17
good	16
nature	14
snow	11
winter	11
national	11
Finland	10
forest	9
area	8
go	8
trails	7
wonderful	7
like	7
summer	6

Table 2. 20 most frequent words in reviews of Pyhä-Luosto National Park written in languages other than Finnish.

“mahtava” (grand), and “kaunis” (beautiful) in Finnish can sometimes express the inner, emotional feeling of the viewer, according to an analysis of lexical relevance in the comments,

Words	Meaning	Frequency count
maisema	landscape	119
paikka	place	119
hyvä	good	105
hieno	fine	84
reitti	route	65
mahtava	grand	62
upea	great	56
kaunis	beautiful	44
luonto	nature	30
suomen	Finnish	17

Table 3. List of the 10 most frequent words in reviews of Pallas-Yllästunturin National Park written in Finnish.

these words are primarily used to describe the landscape (“maisema”) and place (“paikka”).

For example, in the reviews of Pyhä-Luosto National Park, the phrase “upeat maisemat” (great landscape) accounts for nearly half of the occurrences of “upea” (great) (19 out of 40); in the 27 comments related to “mahtava” (grand), “mahtava Paikka” (grand place) appeared 9 times, “mahtava maisemat” (grand landscape) 8 times, and “mahtava” is also highly associated with nature (“luonto”) and other specific landscapes like fells (“tunturit”) and gorges (“kurut”). This data reflects a cultural appreciation of nature. Visual enjoyment forms a crucial element of this appreciation, and beyond that, it also encompasses an emotional response to the parks’ natural settings. The specific features of the landscape, such as fells and gorges, point to a deep engagement with the environment.

Words	Frequency count
beautiful	71
place	46
nature	39
ski	34
park	32
great	27
hike	25
winter	22
nice	22
national	17
amazing	14
good	12
wonderful	12
trails	11
area	11
views	10
walking	10
Lapland	9
air	9
best	9

Table 2. 20 most frequent words in reviews of Pallas-Yllästunturin Park written in languages other than Finnish

“Hyvä” (good) and “hieno” (fine) reflect a generally positive sentiment towards the parks. The word “reitti” (route) appearing in the top 10 for both parks suggests a significant engagement

with the trail systems, indicating that walking or hiking could be a major activity for domestic visitors. However, combined with the context, the trail is perceived more as a conduit to the scenery rather than the central focus of the domestic visitors' experience. For instance, comments like "with its varied routes and stunning scenery, it is one of the best in Finland in all seasons"¹⁷ and "a wide range of routes and great nature to admire"¹⁸ both underscore the importance of the trail systems as a means to access and engage with the natural beauty of the parks.

Turning to the non-Finnish reviews, we see a similar appreciation for the natural beauty of the parks, as seen in the frequent use of "beautiful", "great", and "nice". "Place" and "park" underline the importance of the physical locations and their designation as national parks. "Nature" is frequently mentioned, underlining the parks' roles as sites for experiencing natural environments. However, we also see the emergence of certain activities as central to the non-Finnish visitor experience, particularly "hike" and "ski", suggesting a more active engagement with the distinctive local outdoor sports. "Winter" also features in the top words for both parks, hinting at the popularity of the parks during this season for international visitors.

It was observed that domestic visitors to both parks were highly focused on the landscape, while in contrast, international visitors did not emphasize the landscape as much in their comments. Domestic visitors, likely familiar with the natural features of Finland, place emphasis more on the aesthetic value of the parks' unique landscapes. This aligns with Finnish cultural narratives that value the appreciation of natural

beauty and wilderness¹⁹, while international visitors may not share the same visual paradigms and aesthetic discourses as domestic visitors.

Landscape as a way of seeing²⁰ carries collective memory and shared emotions. It serves as a unified code for specific social and cultural attributes. When the preconceived image of the landscape overlaps with the on-site experience, emotions are amplified²¹, and the bodily experience yields to the visual experience. This encoding of landscape images is inextricably linked to certain discourses, especially nature conservation, environmentalism, and nationalism.

Finland has a history of conserving its natural landmarks for aesthetic and tourism purposes, dating back to the 19th century. The preservation of natural landscapes and the promotion of domestic tourism were closely linked to the formation of national identity; indeed, patriotism was a central motivation behind the establishment of national parks in Finland, as well as in other countries²². Consequently, Finnish visitors to these national parks are inevitably under the influence of patriotic landscape imagery. On the other hand, after World War II, with the rise of nature conservation, the Lapland region was

- 17 Original text: "Monipuolisten reittien ja upeiden maisemien puolesta aivan Suomen kärkeä kaikkina vuodenaikoina." Translated with DeepL Translator.
- 18 Original text: "Monipuolinen reittitarjonta ja upeita luontokohteita ihmeteltäväksi." Translated with DeepL Translator.

- 19 Oula Seitsonen and Gabriel Moshenska, "Who owns the 'Wilderness'? Indigenous Second World War Landscapes in Sápmi, Finnish Lapland," in *Conflict Landscapes: Materiality and Meaning in Contested Places*, ed. Nicholas J. Saunders and Paul Cornish (London: Routledge, 2021).
- 20 Denis Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 10, no. 1 (1985): 45-62; W. J. T. Mitchell, "Preface to the Second Edition of *Landscape and Power*," in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), vii-xii.
- 21 Maunu Häyrynen, "The Kaleidoscopic View: The Finnish National Landscape Imagery," *National Identities*, 2(1) (2000) 5-19.
- 22 Puhakka and Saarinen, "New Role of Tourism in National Park Planning in Finland," 2013; Frost, Warwick, and C. Michael Hall. *Tourism and national parks* (London: Routledge, 2010); Mels, "Nature, home and scenery," 140.

promoted as “the last wilderness”, while also incorporating more commercial features. The landscapes of these national parks gradually became new national imagery²³, with narratives of nature preservation intertwined with Romanticized nationalism, specific landscape images can evoke corresponding emotions.

The shaping of discourse is molded by the combined influences of various mediums such as language and imagery. As representations of discourses, these mediums jointly act upon the perceptions and experiences of different tourists. In the following section, I will attempt to analyze how, in the case of national parks, discourses primarily operate through two facets: the mechanism of institutional apparatus and institutional technologies. In practice, these two aspects have differing impacts on domestic and international tourists. I will delve into this phenomenon using the insights from my field research in the Lapland region.

Disciplined Body in Managed Nature

In May and September 2023, I conducted fieldwork in Pyhä-Luosto National Park. Through the analysis of the park’s knowledge apparatus and the technologies that lead and discipline the physical experiences, I sought to explore the reasons for the different focuses of domestic and international tourists.

I divided the material collected in Pyhä-Luosto National Park into two groups. The first group relates to scientific knowledge, environmental discourse, local history, and the laws and regulations within the park. These materials can be seen as institutional apparatus, which sets the fundamental agenda for the operation of the national park. The other group involves specific strategies for guiding and controlling the physical activities and viewing behaviors of

visitors, including tools such as signposts and markers, as well as the design of trails. These designs, influenced by the apparatus and based on environmental conservation principles, aim to present nature in its most unaltered form to visitors. At the same time, these designs also function as technologies that directly interact with visitors.

The Visitor Centre Naava serves as the primary venue for displaying text materials in the park, constructing an overall view of the natural knowledge in the Lapland region and the park’s conservation measures. The exhibition in Naava illustrates the natural and cultural history of Pyhä-Luosto National Park, which contains an abundance of descriptive information, mainly introducing the park’s long history since the Stone Age and Ice Age, its distinctive landscapes in different seasons, biodiversity, as well as the protection of indigenous groups and their culture and lifestyle. Among these texts, there are many guiding messages with detailed and poetic descriptions of the Lapland natural landscape, such as:

“The blue dusk at the heart of winter drapes the forests and fells. The soft thick snow cover makes the wilderness look intensely beautiful. The forest around you appears to be quiet; only the dry snow crunches under your skis. Stop for a while, listen and watch – nature does not sleep even in winter.” (Image 1.)

This quote employs evocative language to construct a narrative that romanticizes and mystifies the natural landscape of Lapland. It first tells the visitors what to observe – dusk, forests, fells – and then guides them to interact with nature – stop, listen, and watch. Through its concise description, it conveys the “correct” way to engage in the tour. Subsequently, in the following paragraphs, the text adopts a scientific tone to direct visitors’ attention to the unique ecological environment of Lapland in winter – “only a unique combination of species has the ability to live here.”

23 Häyrynen, “The Kaleidoscopic View,” 13.

Talven salaisuudet

Sydäntalven sininen hämärä verhoaa metsiä ja tuntureita ja paksu pehmeä lumikerros saa luonnon näyttämään pelkistetyin kauniilta. Metsä ympärillä vaikuttaa hiljaiselta, ainoastaan pakkaslumi nariisee suksien alla. Pysähdy silti hetkeksi, kuuntele ja katsele, luonto ei nuku talvellakaan.

Keski-Lapin talvi on toki kova haaste niin kasveille kuin eläimillekin. Pakkanen, pimeys, lumi ja jää rajoittavat elinmahdollisuuksia monella tavalla. Tänne onkin valikoitunut juuri sellainen ainutlaatuinen lajisto, jolla on parhaat keinot selvitä talven koettelemuksista.

Puusta toiseen pyrähtelevä tiaisparvi ei suinkaan liiku päämäärättömästi, vaan ne noudattavat jo syyskesällä laatimaansa suunnitelmaa. Keksitkö niiden salaisuuden? Entä mitä tapahtuukaan lumen alla? Minkä eläimen jäljet nuo ovat? Tarkkaile, kurkista, täältä näyttelystä löydät vastauksia talvisen luonnon salaisuuksiin.



Lapintiaiset
Siberian tit
Parus cinctus

Secrets of Winter

The blue dusk at the heart of winter drapes the forests and fells. The soft thick snow cover makes the wilderness look intensely beautiful. The forest around you appears to be quiet; only the dry snow crunches under your skis. Stop for a while, listen and watch – nature does not sleep even in winter.

Winter in Central Lapland poses a severe challenge for plants and animals. The freezing cold weather, darkness, snow and ice restrict living conditions in many ways. Consequently, only a unique combination of species has the ability to live here, the kind that possesses the best means for surviving the hardships of winter.

The flock of titmice fluttering from tree to tree in no way moves aimlessly but according to a plan that they drew up in late summer. Will you figure out their secret? And what happens under the snow? Which animal has walked here? Observe, take a peek – the exhibition invites you to uncover some of the secrets of the winter landscape.

Image 1. “Secrets of Winter” – Installation in Naava tourist center. Photo: Chenru Xue 2023, license CC BY-SA 4.0.

This is a typical Western impression of the Arctic – winter, wilderness, naturally growing vegetation, and deliberate neglect of human activity traces. These elements collectively shape the legitimacy and necessity of national parks as institutions for nature conservation. In this text, nature is described as primitivity and uninhibitedness, requiring protection from human activities. The premise of this protection is the dichotomy between culture and nature. This dichotomy implies a form of colonial ecological violence – the discourse of nature conservation is embedded into the governance of northern Finland through the landscape iconography and unreflective mainstream narratives.

In addition to descriptions of immersing in nature, the exhibition also contains numerous introductions to the park’s management strategies. One display panel particularly emphasizes the conservation and management achievements from 1938, when Pyhätunturi (the former name of Pyhä-Luosto National Park) was established, up to 2018 (Image 2.). Through an 80-year comparison, Pyhätunturi has transformed from a “roadless wilderness” with no “marked trails, signs, or constructions” into a modern tourist destination today²⁴, equipped with hotels, cabins, glass and snow igloos, and compressing a total of 84 km of summer hiking routes, as well as cross-country skiing tracks and biking trails.

The description in the image of the past Pyhätunturi as a “roadless wilderness” reaffirms the colonial ecological hegemony inherent in this discourse. Pyhätunturi is a significant part of the Sámi indigenous heritage. The Forest Sámi, who once lived in the Pyhä-Luosto area, considered the

24 The quoted texts are from Image 2.



Pyhätunturi Fell sacred²⁵. However, the Sámi culture doesn't sharply distinguish between nature and culture, unlike the prevailing worldview. For instance, Päivi Magga notes that the Sámi do not see humans as dominators of nature; their traces in the landscape are subtle, which can leave an impression of wilderness and uninhabited land to outsiders²⁶. On the other hand, designating a geographical location as wilderness is a human act, closely tied to cultural ideologies influenced by social and political policies²⁷. In fact, most lands forming national parks and wilderness areas are not unrestricted. This discourse often leads to landscapes being idealized and managed as intact, high-value biodiversity areas, supposedly free from human disturbance²⁸.



Image 2. “80 years outdoors” – Installation in Naava tourist center. Photo: Chenru Xue 2023, license CC BY-SA 4.0.

It is also noteworthy that the two accompanying illustrations in this panel hint at the more representative visitor groups from different periods. In 1938, visitors relied on maps and compasses. At a time when cameras were not common, an older male carrying a camera created an image of a professional. In contrast, in the 2018 illustration, visitors primarily carry electronic watches and

smartphones. The woman in the picture, carrying a lightweight backpack and dressed in casual, comfortable sportswear, looks directly at the camera with a relaxed and confident expression. This contrast implies a subtle transformation in the concept of wilderness over the past 80 years. The wilderness was once a place dominated by the perspectives of explorers, scientists, and cartographers, where men viewed it as a primitive and extreme arena for masculinity, a barren land to be conquered²⁹. In Finland, “Lapland” and “the North” were once subjects of oversimplification and stereotyping, representing exoticism, romanticism, mystery, and the unknown³⁰. Today, with the rise of environmental conservation movements, wilderness has been redefined as a

25 “History of Pyhä-Luosto National Park,” Metsähallitus, accessed January 7, 2024, <https://www.nationalparks.fi/pyha-luostonp/history>

26 Päivi Magga, “Defining the Sámi Cultural Environment,” in *The Sámi World*, ed. Sanna Valkonen et al. (London: Routledge, 2022), 134–49.

27 Angenette Spalink, “Parks as Performance: Wilderness and Colonial Ecological Violence in ‘The Hidden Worlds of the National Parks,’” *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* 18, no. 3 (2 September 2022): 374–89.

28 Michael-Shawn Fletcher et al., “Indigenous Knowledge and the Shackles of Wilderness,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, no. 40 (5 October 2021): e2022218118.

29 Douglas Cazaux Sackman, “The Gender Trouble with Wilderness,” *Reviews in American History* 34, no. 2 (2006): 208–13.

30 Juha Ridanpää, “A Masculinist Northern Wilderness and the Emancipatory Potential of Literary Irony,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 17, no. 3 (June 2010): 319–35.

concept that fosters the protection and enjoyment of natural areas³¹. Meanwhile, these two images, along with their corresponding textual descriptions, powerfully persuade the audience that decades of development and management have made Pyhä-Luosto National Park an accessible wilderness destination for everyone, not just for professional mountaineers. The aesthetic values related to nature conservation serve ideologies associated with public policies.

“All discourse is organized to make itself persuasive.”³² This principle has been illustrated in Visitor Centre Naava. The exhibition, as a representation of the institutional apparatus, serves to create a specific discourse that subtly shapes the visitors’ perception and interaction with the park. It creates a conceptual path, guiding visitors towards a certain understanding of nature, conservation, and cultural heritage. On the other hand, what these texts attempt to downplay is the fact that the boundaries of the park, the restrictions on land use within these boundaries, and the basic principles of management are all human-defined. In other words, these landscapes are not wilderness in the truest sense; the monumental landscapes in the park are carefully selected, patriotic-centric motifs that form constructive parts of the national identity³³.

However, when considering the impact of these narratives on domestic and international tourists,

31 Giacomo Zanolin and Valerià Paül, “Exploring the Sustainability of Wilderness Narratives in Europe. Reflections from Val Grande National Park (Italy),” *Geographical Review* 112, no. 3 (27 May 2022): 444–65.

32 Rosalind Gill, “Discourse Analysis: Practical Implementation,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Methods for Psychology and the Social Sciences*, ed. John T. Richardson (Leicester: British Psychological Society, 1996), 141–56.

33 Teijo Rytteri and Riikka Puhakka, “Formation of Finland’s National Parks as a Political Issue,” *Ethics, Place & Environment* 12, no. 1 (March 2009): 91–106; Mels, “Nature, home and scenery.”; Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 3rd ed. (Lincoln London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

it seems from the comments that international visitors do not use the same set of aesthetic discourses or focus on the same scenery as the local visitors. I speculate that the language barrier and varying degrees of cultural familiarity is one of the reasons for the differing levels of access to and engagement with the park’s narrative among these visitors.

According to the previous statistics, approximately 35% of Google reviews for Pyhä-Luosto National Park were posted in non-Finnish languages. Of these, 52.9% were written in English, while the remaining 47.1% utilized other languages. However, in Visitor Centre Naava’s exhibitions, apart from a few interactive electronic screens with six languages (Finnish, English, Swedish, French, German, Russian), all the display boards only contain Finnish and English texts. To a certain extent, some foreign visitors might be excluded from fully accessing and understanding the conveyed information due to language barriers. Consequently, in the uneven language representation, power dynamics shape the knowledge production about the park, which implies a form of discursive exclusion, in which certain tourists are omitted from the park’s ecological, historical, and cultural contexts due to language constraints.

This situation is also evident at the entrance to Pyhä-Luosto National Park. Upon entering the park from the Naava Visitor Centre, one encounters a large signboard (Image 3.) detailing the unique landscapes the park offers. This installation is also available in both English and Finnish. The signboard allocates a significant part to explaining the park’s unique topography, such as the ancient fells and gorges, forests and mires, while a smaller part directs visitors on how to access these spots via hiking trails and skiing tracks. It can be inferred that the entire trail planning of the park is constructed following the natural destinations, with the aim of leading visitors to view as much of the unique scenery as possible.



Image 3. Introductory installation in Pyhä-Luosto National Park. Photo: Chenru Xue 2023, license CC BY-SA 4.0.

Appreciation of the scenery is, to a certain extent, dependent on the operation of discourse. Knowledge production, led by the apparatus and centered on patriotism and nature conservation, categorizes the park's landscapes, informing people what is special, rare, and worthy of attention. Without understanding these guiding contents, visitors are more likely to let their gaze follow the signs and trails because, within the park, the installation of overt directional or interpretive signage is minimized.

A more direct example of discursive exclusion can be found near one of the park's key destinations, the Isokuru Gorge (Image 4.). After hiking for nearly three hours in the park, I encountered the first installation inside the park that provided a detailed introduction to a natural destination. It is titled "Panning for gold at Kultakero," with a rare use of five languages—Finnish, Swedish, English, German, and Russian. The text introduces an unsuccessful gold-digging effort at the Isokuru Gorge in 1906. Noticeably, the Finnish text provides a more detailed account, depicting

the gold panning journey of Finland's famous gold digger Henry Kerkelä, meanwhile emphasizing that Kultakero is "a valuable monument to the history of Lapland's golden mining"³⁴.

This disparity in narrative depth suggests that planners may view this aspect of the park's history as less significant to international visitors, and assume that domestic visitors would have a greater intrinsic interest in the nuanced facets of their national history and cultural heritage. This approach to narrative presentation mirrors a broader tendency within heritage management to prioritize narratives and interpretations that resonate more strongly with domestic audiences. The assumption is that international visitors are primarily attracted by the universal aspects of nature and wilderness, as well as stereotypical "Arctic" activities such as skiing, snowshoeing,

34 Original text: "Kaivokset, samoin kuin Kultakeron rinneessä oleva onkalokin, ovat arvokkaita muistomerkkejä Lapin kullankaivun historiasta." Translated with DeepL Translator.



Image 4. Installation at Kultakero, Isokuru Gorge. Photo: Chenru Xue 2023, license CC BY-SA 4.0.

etc., rather than specific historical stories. However, this strategy risks underestimating the interest and capacity of international visitors to engage with complex historical narratives, potentially leading to a homogeneous and superficial experience of the park's rich cultural heritage. As international tourism grows, nature-based tourism may gradually become one of the main discourses in Finnish national parks³⁵, and there might be a need to reassess these narrative strategies.

Unlike the situation in the United States, where the tourism industry's economic potential is more prominently recognized, Finland's emphasis on a strong natural scientific perspective in nature conservation means that the economic potential of its tourism industry receives less attention³⁶. Decision-makers impose stricter limitations on the impact of tourism. It might be one of the reasons why installations with introductory content are not commonly seen in Pyhä-Luosto National

- 35 Riikka Puhakka et al., "Local Discourses and International Initiatives: Sociocultural Sustainability of Tourism in Oulanka National Park, Finland," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 17, no. 5 (25 August 2009): 529–49.
- 36 Rytteri and Puhakka, "Formation of Finland's National Parks as a Political Issue."

Park – there is a more cautious attitude towards transforming the wilderness into an outdoor museum. However, as tourism in national parks, particularly in Northern Finland, gradually becomes an important tool for regional development³⁷, socio-economic objectives are increasingly becoming another core focus for Finnish national parks alongside ecological goals. In the long term, more introductory and guiding facilities may be established within Finland's national parks.

Currently, the institutional technologies within the park are mainly limited to signposts at key junctions and the numerous different colored markers (Image 5.). Visitors determined whether they were on the "correct" route based on the colored markings. These markings, acting as a form of bodily management technology, serve multiple purposes. They guide, direct, and inform visitors³⁸, with a need to take into account the trail's surface, direction, and gradient, while also adding an appropriate degree of interest and challenge. They must avoid causing negative emotions due to improper placement or causing discomfort due to overly dense control over people's behaviors³⁹. Compared to text, maps and signs offer greater readability to visitors who use different languages. These universal visual aids transcend linguistic barriers and provide a straightforward way for visitors to navigate and understand the park. This color-coding system, an example of

- 37 Riikka Puhakka, "Kansallispuistot murroksessa: tutkimus luonnonsuojelun ja matkailun tavoitteiden kohtaamisesta." PhD diss., University of Joensuu, 2007.
- 38 Simon Bell, *Design for Outdoor Recreation*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon; New York: Taylor & Francis, 2008); Michael Gross, Ronald Zimmerman, and James Buchholz, *Signs, Trails, and Wayside Exhibits: Connecting People and Places*, 3rd ed (Stevens Point, WI: UW-SP Foundation Press, 2006).
- 39 Lekies, "Constructing the Nature Experience."



Image 5. Signs of different colors leading the hiking routes. Photo: Chenru Xue 2023, license CC BY-SA 4.0.

non-linguistic institutional technology, provided a simple and efficient way to guide visitors' movement within the park. By just following the color markers, visitors can navigate the trails with minimal need for additional information or assistance.

While these signs and guides are useful for all visitors, their role may be particularly pronounced for international visitors. These designs function as technologies that directly interact with visitors. A foreign visitor's experience does not directly articulate with the discourses and knowledge that precede the experience. Furthermore, the reliance on these signs also limits the depth of understanding and engagement with the park, as the information they convey is more about spatial orientation rather than the cultural, historical, or ecological context of the landscape. For domestic visitors, meanwhile, their deeper familiarity with the landscape and local cultural narratives allows them to engage with the park in different ways beyond the prescriptive guidance of these signs and markers.

Discussion

Through the examination of institutional apparatus and institutional technologies in

Pyhä-Luosto National Park, the following speculations can be made: for international visitors, institutional technologies might be more influential. When they visit the national parks, they engage with the physical layout of the park, the demarcated trails, informational signage and so forth. These elements are designed to guide their movement and behavior within the park, shaping their embodied experience of the place. International visitors rely heavily on these tools, since they might not have prior knowledge or cultural associations with the park. The focus on specific sites or activities (e.g., hiking, skiing) in the word frequency analysis of their reviews could be a reflection of the influence of these physical, place-based technologies. For them, the influence of institutional technologies can be seen in how they interact with the park's physical layout, signage, and facilities. These technologies can guide the gaze and direct attention, creating a particular experience of place, through which certain subject positions have been produced.

On the other hand, for domestic visitors, the influence of the institutional apparatus is stronger. Domestic visitors usually have a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the park's cultural and historical context, shaped by the knowledge produced by the institutional apparatus. This could

include the park's status as a national symbol, narratives about the park's role in Finnish history and identity, and the aesthetics and values associated with the Finnish landscape. Landscapes are not just physical places but also cultural and symbolic representations⁴⁰. Domestic visitors' experience of the park is articulated with broader discourses and collective memories, rather than just the immediate physical experience.

The distinction between apparatus and technology is somewhat overlapping. For instance, in the context of national parks, the physical entity of an installation can be considered an institutional technology, but its content and narrative are representations of the apparatus. While the technologies are tangible and directly interact with the visitors, they are deeply influenced by the apparatus. They are not neutral but are imbued with the narratives and perspectives that the apparatus seeks to promote.

The relationship between apparatus, technologies, and discourse in a national park is dynamic. The apparatus sets the overarching narrative and perspective, which is then materialized through various technologies. These technologies, in turn, shape the discourse encountered by visitors. For instance, an installation that tells the story of gold mining in Lapland not only provides information about this specific historical event but also participates in the construction of a broader discourse about the region's history and its significance. This interplay significantly influences how visitors perceive and understand the park. The apparatus's choice of narratives and the technologies used to convey them can guide visitors toward a certain understanding of the park's natural and cultural significance. This process is a form of discursive construction.

It is worth noticing that this study only discusses the impacts within Pyhä-Luosto National Park

40 Mitchell, "Preface to the Second Edition of Landscape and Power."

as a specific discursive space. The divergence between different visitor groups is also rooted in more complex reasons, such as commercial marketing strategies and the promotion of Lapland national parks in different countries. In Northern Finland, especially in the Lapland region, nature-based tourism remains a significant component of the local economy⁴¹. Environmental education is currently a new trend in ecotourism⁴². To achieve the goal of providing educational and interpretive content for a more diverse international audience, measures can be taken to enhance the articulation between institutional technology and apparatus: firstly, by enhancing multilingual information within the park and expanding the range of languages used in installations and signage to cater to a more diverse international audience; secondly, by setting up more interactive and inclusive exhibits that engage visitors from various cultural backgrounds; and lastly, by increasing digital engagement through the use of digital technologies, such as mobile apps or augmented reality, to provide visitors with additional layers of information and interpretation that can be customized according to their interests and backgrounds.

Conclusion

Pyhä-Luosto National Park, like other national parks around the world, is more than just a natural reserve or a recreational space, but also a complex socio-cultural and institutional

41 Jarkko Saarinen, "The Regional Economics of Tourism in Northern Finland: The Socio-Economic Implications of Recent Tourism Development and Future Possibilities for Regional Development," *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 3, no. 2 (December 2003): 91–113.

42 Peter Fredman and Lusine Margaryan, "20 Years of Nordic Nature-Based Tourism Research: A Review and Future Research Agenda," *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 21, no. 1 (1 January 2021): 14–25; Stephen Wearing and Stephen Schweinsberg, *Ecotourism: Transitioning to the 22nd Century* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019).

construct. As an institution, the national park exerts discourse through various apparatuses and technologies, shaping the visitor's experience and interactions with the park.

Inspired by Foucault's theory, the apparatus I discuss primarily refers to the interactive system between discourses, historical narratives, laws, and management policies. I elucidate the functioning of this apparatus primarily through an examination of the park's internal interpretative texts. The park's narrative construction is influenced by historical, ecological, and cultural discourses. The core of the park's discourse is based on nationalism, emphasizing the importance of nature conservation and legitimizing the park's functions by establishing a separation between culture and nature. These discourses also create the wilderness aesthetics of Lapland. Institutional technology, on the other hand, refers to the concrete techniques employed for exercising power and managing bodies. In this study, it is mainly limited to the park's internal guidance systems and display techniques, such as installations and signage. It acts as a conduit for the apparatus, subtly influencing how visitors engage with the park. I argue that the institution operates following both aspects, which lead to different impacts on the visiting experiences of tourists from diverse backgrounds.

The Google reviews of Pyhä-Luosto National Park are a representation of the varied influences. The analysis of the visitor reviews reveals a distinct divergence in the experiences of domestic and international visitors. International visitors prefer to comment on specific activities within the park, instead of the landscape. For them, the experience is mainly shaped by the park's physical layout, signage, and facilities. Domestic visitors' experiences are shaped not just by the park's physical environment, but also by the broader narratives and collective memories associated with the Finnish landscape and identity. For them, the knowledge about Lapland is not just a

reflection of the park's institutional constructs, but a part of their collective consciousness.

The visitor experience in Pyhä-Luosto National Park is a carefully orchestrated interplay of narrative and physical interaction, where each element serves to reinforce certain perspectives and understandings of the constructed nature. The construction of natural discourse in Pyhä-Luosto National Park carries a hegemonic tone. As demonstrated in the historical texts at the Naava Visitor Center, the traumas of war and the traces of the Sámi people are erased from the landscape. These narratives create an illusion of a tranquil and peaceful wilderness, devoid of any counter-narratives.

As the park continues to evolve, it is crucial to reassess and potentially diversify the narratives. This involves not only expanding the linguistic and cultural scope of the narratives presented, enhancing the relevance of the park experience for a broader range of visitors, but also reconsidering the binary concept of nature and culture, and reincorporating the local events and personal memories into the narrative of the landscape.

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