

Forest

Knowledge

Know-how

Well-being

METLA

Communities of Practice in non-industrial private forestry

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Katri Korhonen¹, Teppo Hujala², Mikko
Kurttila³, Outi Virkkula⁴

¹ University of Eastern Finland

² Finnish Forest Research Institute (Metla), Vantaa Unit

³ Finnish Forest Research Institute (Metla), Joensuu Unit

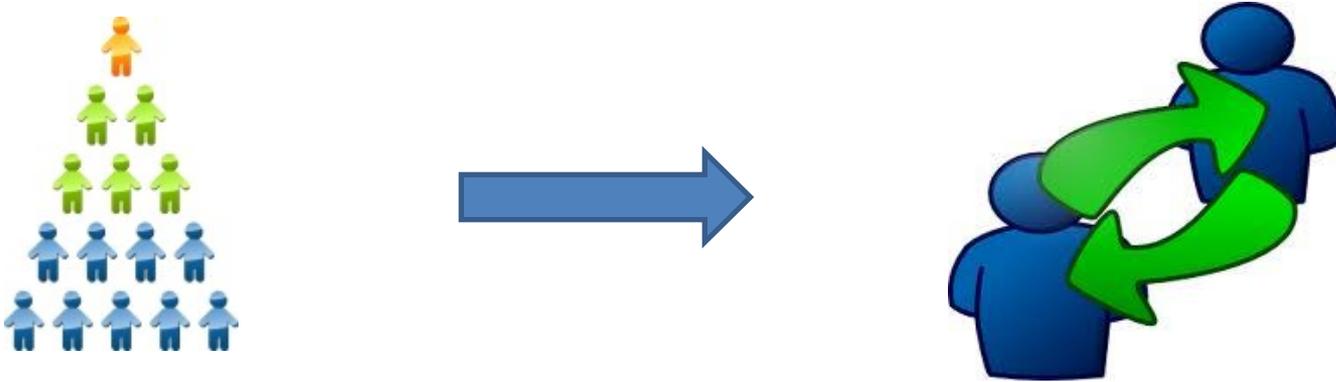
⁴ Oulu University of Applied Sciences, Oulu, Finland

Introduction:

Changes in private forestry (in Finland)

- “New“ forest uses (e.g. bioenergy and biodiversity protection) -> new decision making situations for private forest owners
 - New kind of forest owners: economically less dependent and spatially estranged from their forest properties
 - Changes in forest planning services and public guidance
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- Old ways to reach and encourage forest owners for forestry decisions are not enough
 - A potential model to diversify and renew guidance of forest owners is *peer learning*

Aim of the study



1. What kind of peer learning exists among forest owners?
 - Theory: Communities of Practice
2. How could peer learning be enhanced?

Theory: Communities of Practise	Data & Analysis	Results: Existing situation	Results: Possibilities and barriers of future	Conclusion
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Theory: Communities of practice (CoPs)

- *“Communities of practice are groups of people who share a passion for something that they know how to do, and who interact regularly in order to learn how to do it better.”*
Wenger 2004
- CoPs:
 - Groups of people, who find value in their interaction and learn from the experiences of others
 - Develop the professional skills of members
 - Communication is easy and people know whom to ask - problems are solved more easily
 - Provide identity to members

Main elements of CoPs

- **Community (who)**
 - relationships, trust, cohesion and reciprocity between group members
- **Domain (what)**
 - the essential topic around which the community is gathered
- **Practice (how)**
 - customs and ways to share the knowledge
 - tools, methods and skills the community uses

Data and analysis

- 7 Focus group interviews in Finland (n=44)
 - National forestry extension developers (1)
 - Local forest professionals (4)
 - Forest owners (experienced 1, inexperienced 1)
- Discussion considered
 - Existing communication between forest owners
 - Benefits and drawbacks of possible peer learning
- Qualitative content analysis (themes: community, domain, practice)

	Community	Domain	Practice
Group 1			
Group 2			
Group 3			

Results: existing elements of CoPs

	Community	Domain	Practice
Group 1 The village or neighbourhood network in the countryside	Villagers, neighbours	No specific	Unofficial
Group 2 Family and relatives, who own the forest together	Family members	Forest property	Unofficial
Group 3 Projects arranged by extension organizations	Interested owners in the region	Specific topic of the project (e.g. bioenergy)	Lead by professionals
Group 4 Arranged events (courses, forest day) by the extension organizations	Interested owners in the region	Changing topics	Courses and lectures, lead by professionals
Group 5 Clubs for forest owners in bigger cities	Interested owners in certain cities	Changing topics	Regular meetings of the club
Group 6 Discussion forums in Internet	No specified community	All kind of topics	Anonym discussions in web

Strong community:

The village or neighbourhood network in the countryside

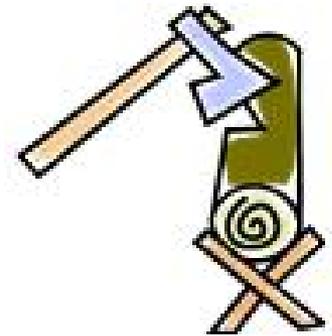


- Community
 - everyday interactions, long-term acquaintances
- Practice:
 - unofficial practices
 - one-to-one discussions
 - meetings of different interest groups (hunting clubs)
 - visible examples from other owners
- No specific domain (actions in forest, joint projects, the quality of forest services)

Strong domain:

Projects arranged by extension organizations

- Domain:
 - Specified topic, e.g. bioenergy and wood chips heating systems
- Practice:
 - Lectures and visits, lead by professionals
- Community
 - Interested owners in the region
 - The longer the project exists – more discussions and sharing experiences, searching for support among participants



Strong practice:

Clubs for forest owners in bigger cities

- Practice
 - Regular meetings (lectures, visits)
 - Unofficial discussions among members
 - Newsletters and web pages
- Domain
 - Aim is to increase members knowledge about the forests
 - Focus is on different issues every time
- Community
 - e.g. in Helsinki, Oulu, Joensuu
 - Most active owners



Future possibilities, barriers and questions

Community	Domain	Practice
<p>-Homogenous or heterogenous members?</p> <p>-Mentors are a surplus</p> <p>-Are Finns able to speak and share their experiences?</p> <p>-Small size of community is a surplus</p> <p>-Reaching passive owners is the biggest challenge – invitation from other owners?</p>	<p>- Topic should be focused and pre-defined</p> <p>-Fear is that opinions or even wrong information can be delivered in CoPs as a truth</p> <p>-Taboo issues: money, timber trade, hectares, nature protection</p> <p>-Easy to talk about: experiences of services, forest damages, silvicultural actions</p>	<p>-Face-to-face meetings are important</p> <p>-Meetings in a forest are a surplus</p> <p>-Owners have no time to participate?</p> <p>-Controversial internet practices: an effective way to communicate or delivery of pure opinions?</p>

Conclusion

At the moment:

- Practices are strongly based on activities of forest extension organizations
- Informal communities exist in the countryside, but are decreasing
- Need for new kinds of communities in cities

For the future:

- Focused and interesting domains are needed
- Suitable reference groups for different forest owners (women, retired, hunters, nature conservationists)
- Possibilities of internet could be utilized better, but needs studying and developing of practices

Thank You.

