

**THESIS**  
Jenna Sturk 2013

**CROSS-BORDER GREEN CARE CLUSTER  
YLITORNIO E ÖVERTORNEÅ:  
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**



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Thesis

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YLITORNIO Ę ÖVERTORNEÅ: CHALLENGES AND  
OPPORTUNITIES**

Jenna Sturk

2013

Commissioned by Heart of Lapland and Ylitornio Municipality

Supervisors Petra Paloniemi and Ulla Kangasniemi

The thesis cannot be borrowed.

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The purpose of the thesis was to find if there is an interest for businesses in the cross-border municipalities, Ylitornio in Finnish Lapland and Övertorneå in Swedish Norrbotten, to create a cross-border Green Care Cluster and to find the challenges for it and also to recognise the opportunities that could improve the cross-border interaction. The region for research was chosen since it is the hometowns of the author. Green Care is a new concept in tourism and therefore scarce information about the topic is available. The main concept for Green Care is to increase physical and mental well-being through nature-based products and services. In this research Green Care was supported by sustainable tourism, well-being tourism and authenticity.

Qualitative research methods were used in the thesis project, semi-structured interviews and also qualitative content analysis of the collected data. The interviews conducted were individual face-to-face interviews which took place in October 2013.

Findings from the examined interviews expressed the desire from both countries businesses to increase the cooperation between the tourism actors. Yet, nothing has happened since there is no driving force to push it forward at the moment. Also the interest for a Green Care Cluster was grand between the actors. Everyone was interested in participating though two businesses felt their participation was not relevant at the moment but certainly in the near future. The interest to use coopeition as an approach in the cluster seemed positive however, with clear regulations in which areas cooperation or competition is used. As for the opportunities the municipalities may sponsor the cluster in the future for it to expand to the whole Torne Valley region.

Key words                      Green Care, Cluster, Sustainability, Well-being,  
Authenticity, Cooperation

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In brief Green Care is to use natural elements to produce health, social or educational benefits (Haubenhofer, Elings, Hassink, Hine 2010, 106). Three key features of Green Care are also further discussed in the research; sustainability, well-being and authenticity.

The aim of the thesis project was to research the challenges and opportunities for the establishment of a cross-border Green Care Cluster in Ylitornio . Övertorneå region and to answer the question of what motivate the businesses to participate in a cross-border cluster. Ylitornio is located in the eastern part of Finnish Lapland, and Övertorneå is located in the western part of Swedish Norrbotten. The municipalities are small and compete with bigger municipalities and destinations within tourism. For that reason, it is important for Ylitornio and Övertorneå to increase their cooperation.

The cross-border region Ylitornio. Övertorneå is the home of the author and therefore the interest in tourism development and cooperation is high. A goal for the author has always been to develop the tourism industry in the home region especially since the neighbour municipalities Haparanda. Tornio started to grow. Green Care was chosen as a specification for the research since both municipalities use nature as a key feature in their tourism marketing.

Qualitative research methods were used by semi-structured individual interviews of the five businesses which participated in the project. Since a cluster needs a stable base to develop on before it actually starts growing. Therefore, five actors were chosen to participate in the thesis project, two businesses from Finland, Loma-Vietonen and Tuomisen Yrtytarha Oy and three businesses from Sweden, Guesthouse Tornedalen, Hanhivittikko Summer Pasture and Hietalas Handelsträdgård, the businesses are further explained in section 3.2. Not all of the actors are specialised in the tourism industry. Yet, to include these businesses in a Green Care Cluster, automatically make them a part of the tourism sector. This does not mean that all actors have to focus on tourism only but through cooperation with

tourism businesses, they can give the tourists an authentic and memorable experience.

The thesis project clarifies the current situation of cooperation between the actors in Ylitornio and Övertorneå and what thoughts the possible Green Care Cluster and cross-border cooperation acquire. Additionally, the research identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the interaction between the businesses in the municipalities.

## 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### 2.1 Green Care

Green is strongly linked together with environment and sustainability; it is often used as a symbol for environmental friendly features in businesses, whilst Care connects physical and mental presence for improved well-being. (Soini, Ilmarinen, Yli-Viikari, Kirveenummi 2011, 323.) Green Care is an approach used to strengthen the quality of life by increased physical or mental health and well-being (Sempik, Hine, Wilson 2010, 11), due to nature-based well-being products and services similar to Green Tourism products, which are created to strengthen the connection to the environment and to magnify physical and mental well-being (Green tourism of Finland® 2013).

Nature environment and farming are currently the main concentration of Green Care (Jankkila 2012, 14). Anyhow, Green Care is applied to areas such as education, social and health - programs and recently to tourism as well. Since the concept of Green Care reached Finland in 2008 there is scarce information of Green Care development available. Many businesses in Finland have worked according to the Green Care concept before it was acknowledged in Finland. For that reason, increased awareness among possible Green Care businesses has recognised the need for the concepts further development. (Soini, Ilmarinen, Yli-Viikari, Kirveenummi 2011, 320.)

Nature is the first of the three key segments of Green Care, it is used to increase and strengthen the results of therapeutic and rehabilitation processes. It is not necessary to actually be in nature instead nature elements can be brought to the participants to e.g. hospitals or saunas. Additionally, to experience nature for increased results of the rehabilitation process and lastly, the network that the process is experienced with, it ought to be the strongest segment and link all three segments together in Green Care businesses. All three segments ought to be adapted into Green Care Tourism products to strengthen the Green Care aspect of the product and the authenticity as well. (Haubenhöfer, Elings, Hassink, Hine 2010, 106; Jankkila 2012, 22, 24.) Hence, the increased inquisitiveness of Green Care Tourism



depends on cooperation between tourism actors and experience-based product development (Sitra 2013).

Figures 1 and 2 are modified versions of Sempik, Hine and Wilson's figure of the influence of nature and care therapy. Figure 1 describes the passive experience of nature which is divided into two categories. Observation of nature includes the senses sight, smell and touch, whereas activities in nature mean to hike, bike or ski without the use of natural elements. (Sempik, Hine, Wilson 2010, 28, 29.)

The arrows are different stages of nature activities. The first arrow outlines how nature is involved in people's surroundings without the intent of increased well-being (Sempik, Hine, Wilson 2010, 29), as for tourists the travel in, to and from a destination is a passive situation where the surrounding environment can affect the experience.

Increased well-being is incorporated by both observation of nature and activities in nature. Relaxed environments, peaceful landscapes such as Aavasaksa Hill in Ylitornio (Municipality of Ylitornio 2013), healing gardens and other green experiences, similar to Hanhivittikko Summer Pasture (Hanhivittikko, 2013) are good examples. Nature is not moulded by the people at the stage of increased well-being. (Sempik, Hine, Wilson 2010, 29.) However, nature moulds people through relaxed environments that harmonise people's own values with experienced emotions and sights (Sitra 2013).

In the passive experience of nature the stage of therapy is conducted by green treatments and nature therapy, such as relaxation by herbal treatments or group yoga in peaceful landscapes (Sempik, Hine, Wilson 2010, 29; Green Tourism of Finland® 2013).

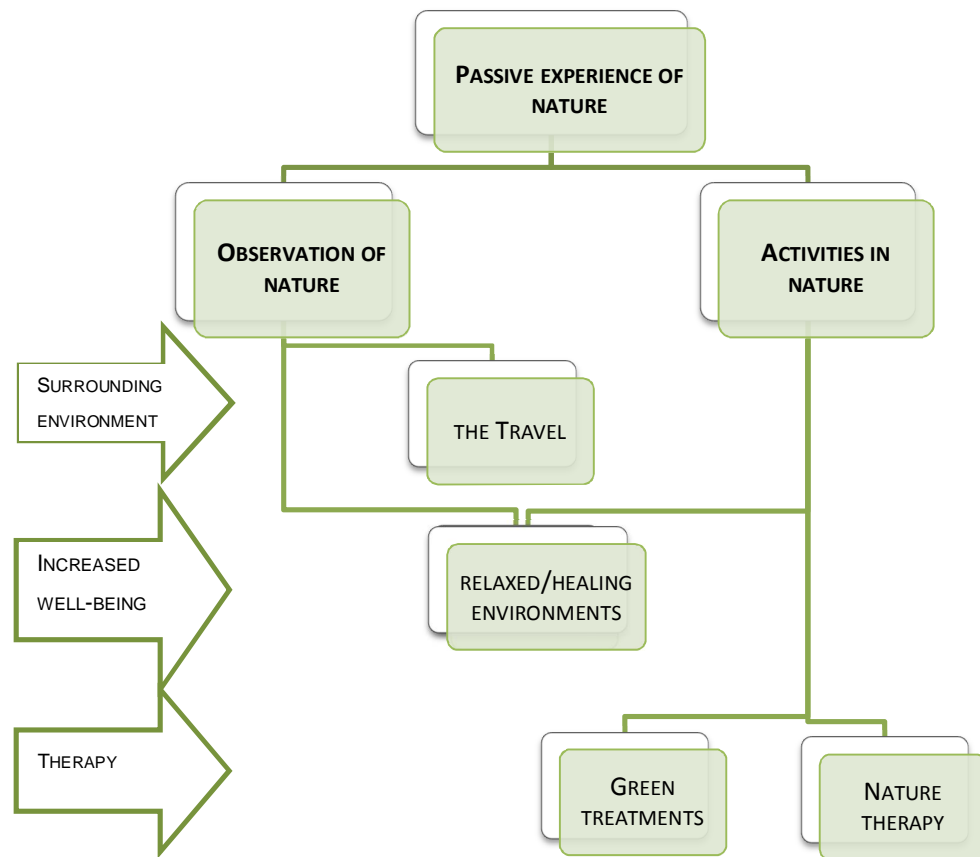


Figure 1 Passive Experience of Nature (Sempik. Hine. Wilson 2010, 28. 29)

Two categories are included in Figure 2 that explains the interaction with natural elements. Firstly, shape of nature, to plant or garden for increased well-being. Secondly, interactions with animals as to take care of the animals to increase their well-being at the same time as own well-being increases (Sempik. Hine. Wilson 2010, 29.), i.e. to care for the animals at Hanhivittikko Summer Pasture. Examples of common animal-assisted therapies in Finland are therapy for elderly people and for autistic children by help from llamas and alpacas. Elderly people experience animal-assisted therapy emotionally, whereas autistic children are able to learn statistic balance whilst interacting with the animals. (Yle 2011.) Social horticulture activities are experiences related to gardening, yet, the main purpose of the activity is to increase well-being by interaction with other people through the same activity whereas,

therapeutic horticulture strives for increased well-being through plant . and gardening related activities. (AHTA 2012, 1).

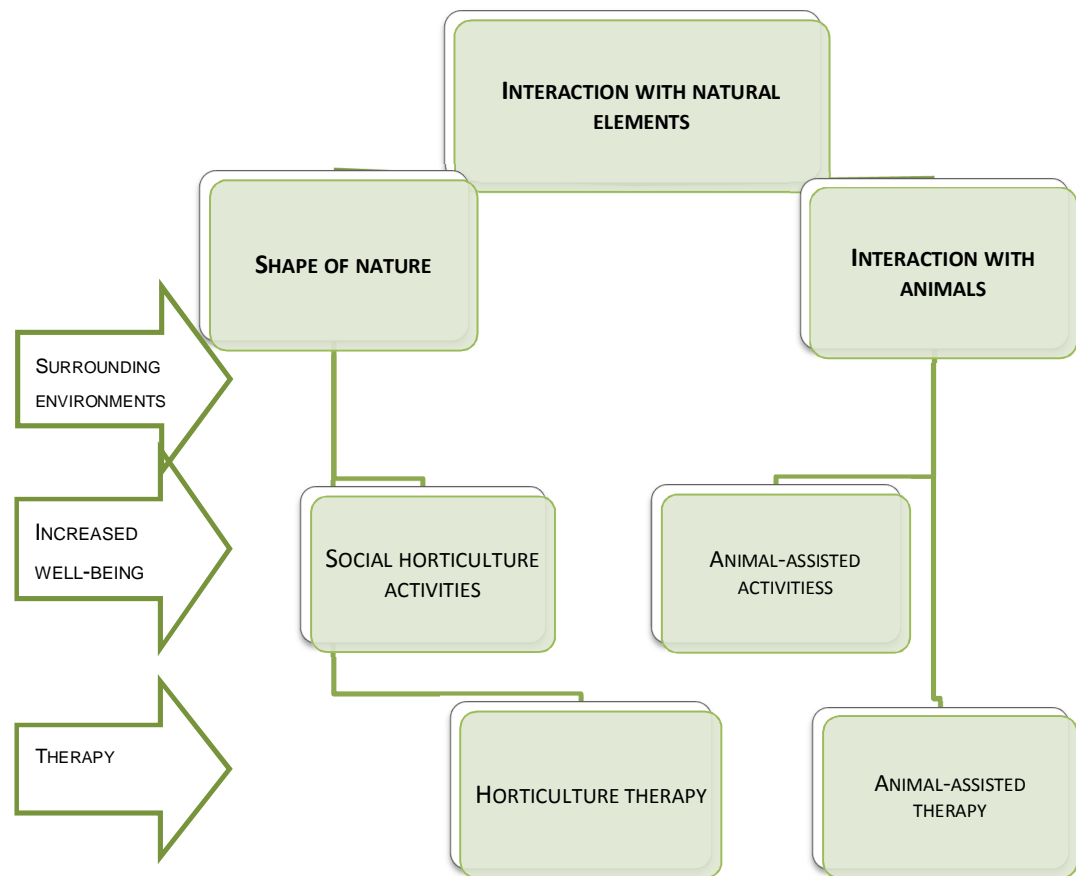


Figure 2 Interaction with Natural Elements (Sempik. Hine. Wilson 2010, 28. 29)

Three significant characteristics of Green Care Tourism are: sustainability tourism, well-being tourism and authenticity. Therefore, these three concepts are further studied in this research.

### 2.1.1 Sustainable Tourism

Sustainability is acknowledged as a requirement for people today to meet their basic needs without destroying the opportunity for future generations to similarly meet their basic needs (NGO Committee on Education 1987). Sustainability is a wide term and to become sustainable does not happen overnight and therefore, basic principles are recognised for an efficient progress such as to only use the amount of natural resources that nature is able to renew in a natural ecological cycle and to only use the amount of

emissions that nature is able to transform into non-toxic elements, i.e. use public transport instead of own car when possible (Spindler 2013, 27).

United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP, and World Tourism Organization, UNWTO, defined sustainable tourism in 2005 (according to UNEP 2012, 13) as follows:

Sustainable tourism is tourism that takes full account of current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. It is not a special form of tourism; rather, all forms of tourism may strive to be more sustainable.

Figure 3 is a reformed version of Rieger's sustainable development triangle; this is created to clarify the importance of different sustainable features for tourism businesses (Rieger 2013, 56). All three features: environmental protection, economic productivity and social consistency ought to be considered for a tourism business to reach long-term sustainability (UNEP 2012, 13). Environmental protection is relevant for each business at all times, especially in tourism, since tourists' accessibility is an important aspect for the businesses and accessibility is associated with carbon emissions. In addition to it tourists are more aware of their own sustainability and how they affect ecology (Rieger 2013, 57. 58.) and they are ready to pay more for an environmental-friendly experience (UNEP 2012, 9). Environmental protection offers advantages such as waste management, recycling and reuse of resources for tourism businesses (Meuser. Von Peinen 2013, 94).

Economic Productivity means to decrease the import of goods and services from abroad and focus on the domestic and local markets (Rieger 2013, 56) and to search for local employees instead of national or international. In addition, this increases the local life standards (Meuser. Von Peinen 2013, 94). It means to increase business visibility in the domestic tourism market because domestic in-bound tourism is more sustainable than tourists who travel far distances (Hall 2013).

The effects of social consistency are not easily recognised within tourism businesses. However, in mass tourism destinations it is found that tourists bring their lifestyles and habits from their home countries and obligate the destination to intersperse these into their cultures and it creates a mixture of two different cultures in the tourism destination. (Vorlaufer 1996 according to Rieger 2013, 58.) Therefore, the touristsqhas a great impact on the social consistency of a tourism business, to respect the traditions and values of the destination (UNEP 2012, 13).

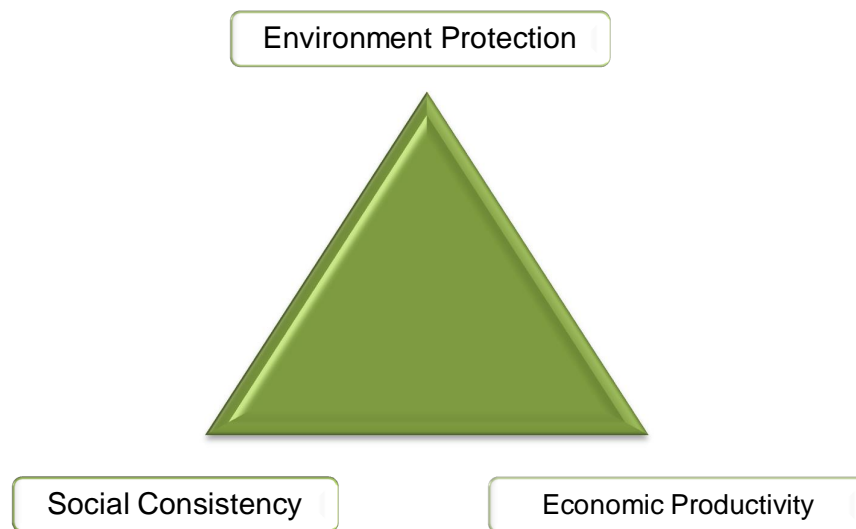


Figure 3 Tourism Business Sustainability Triangle (Rieger 2013, 56)

Sustainability is easily linked together with all Green aspects of tourism however; well-being is even easier linked to Green Care since the main reason for increased Green Care Tourism is the need for improved well-being for tourists and other visitors.

### 2.1.2 Well-being Tourism

Figure 4 states the keywords that are mainly linked with well-being. Although health is mentioned in the figure, the main feature for well-being is not literally to be healthy but to have a holistic well-being based on physical, mental and social factors (World Health Organization 1997, 1), such as welfare, safety and comfort. Welfare is acknowledged as a quality of well-being, which is

influenced by outer factors. In tourism these outer factors are i.e. the environment of the destination and interaction between tourists, locals and staff (Hall. Brown 2006, 2).

The concept of well-being tourism was acknowledged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the spa industries; they improved the well-being of visitors by offering escape from everyday life and relaxed spa treatments. At the same time the spas recognised the need to improve the well-being concept with social activities such as theatres and other meeting facilities, to increase the experience for the visitors. (Robinson. Dieke 2011, 267.) Due to the improvements well-being tourism businesses offered both comfortable and happy experiences for their visitors (WHO 1997, 6; Hall. Brown 2006, 2). However, currently yoga, therapeutic treatments and other services that offer the possibility to find inner-peace, are referred to well-being tourism whilst, spa industries are more known as health and medical tourism sites due to wide range of treatments available (Robinson. Dieke 2011, 267).

Well-being in western countries are recognised by three segments, two connect well-being with the quantity of material and public goods available. Moreover, the last segment specifies on the quality of relations among people and nature. (Hall. Brown 2006, 3.) This segment includes the feel of safety and security in nature and the emotions of comfort and happiness in nature and amongst other people.



Figure 4 Well-being Keywords (WHO 1997, 6; Hall. Brown 2006, 2)

Well-being is the main feature of WHO's definition of quality of life, QOL, which was presented in 1997 (WHO 1997, 1). Tourism is a significant part of the QOL measurement (Hall. Brown 2006, 5). On account of limitations made on this research, the concept is not further studied. However, it does not decline the significance of QOL within well-being tourism. Several researches of QOL have been made and can be found from WHO's website.

### 2.1.3 Authenticity

Authenticity is a real, genuine experience not a tangible product or a state of mind (Timm Knudsen. Waade 2010, 1) and the significance of authenticity increases among consumers since we live in an experience economy. Manufactured products are substituted by genuine experiences since consumers desire original, real experiences instead of fake and copied offers (Yeoman 2008). In other words, the competitive advantage for businesses in the experience economy is the authenticity of their products, services and experiences. (Gilmore. Pine II 2007, 3.) Figure 5 describes the hierarchy of economic values, which is adapted from Pine II and Gilmore's progression of economic value.

Supplies include raw material created by earth such as mined minerals, animals and vegetables. Authentic supplies are considered to be organic and local products. Goods are products manufactured due to the consumer demand. Innovative goods are authentic goods i.e. apple which creates own products without copycatting rivals. (Gilmore. Pine II 2007, 49; Pine II . Gilmore 199, 166.) The products from both supply and goods that are easily recognised as real and trustworthy products are authentic (Timm Knudsen. Waade 2010, 1).

The difference of a service and an experience is briefly that a service is bought for a consumer whilst, an experience is bought to a consumer for memorable moments and personal affection (Pine II. Gilmore 1999, 2; Oxford University Press 2013). Transformations take the experience even further to an extent where the consumer experiences the need to change their own self for the better (Gilmore. Pine II 2007, 50). The theories of Green Care are

based on the transformation level, the need for improved well-being of the consumers.



Figure 5 Hierarchy of Economic Values (Pine II. Gilmore 1999, 166)

The golden rules for authenticity in businesses are to be true to the business and also for the business to really live according to statements and promises made to the consumers (Gilmore. Pine II 2007, 96). In tourism authenticity is clearly found in marketing by destination slogans i.e. Greenland market as ~~an~~ exceptionally real ~~whereas~~ Rovaniemi market as ~~the~~ official hometown of Santa Claus (Gilmore. Pine II 2007, 38; VisitRovaniemi 2013). In addition, the popularity of authentic tourism destinations increases in the experience economy such as developing countries. People travel to developing countries for own transformations due to their personal contribution in the process of creating a better world. (Yeoman 2008.)

By including authenticity, sustainability and well-being in cluster development the significance of each concept affect all members of the cluster. It ought to be remembered that the possibility for increased quality of life for the consumers are needed from the experience-based Green Care products and services available.



## 2.2 Cluster Theory

Porter (2008, 214) clarifies the meaning of a cluster as:

A cluster is a geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities. The geographic scope of a cluster can range from a single city or state to a country or even a network of neighboring countries.

A great amount of similarities are recognised between clusters and networks, for that reason the easiest way to separate the concepts are by their differences. The main differences are the need of a geographical space which clusters have, and that networks may be continuous whilst clusters have a specific goal to strive for (Ketels 2012, 10). There are diverse clusters worldwide and two common types are horizontal and vertical clusters. Horizontal means the actors share same customer targets, channels and technologies within the cluster, whilst vertical is a buyer/supplier cluster that often dependent on the supply chain. (Porter 1990, 149; Ministry of Economy 2013, 2.)

Table 1 explains the development process of clusters, which is based on five phases that include twelve important steps. Gathered support includes two steps; first, introduction of cluster approach relevance, to create a thorough planned strategy. (Cluster Navigators Ltd 2013a.) A specific goal is needed to convert the cluster into a greater concept than an ordinary project. Clusters commonly include a wide-range of industries. Therefore, political and regional boundaries have to be disregarded for the cluster to develop preferably. (Cluster Navigators Ltd 2013a; E4oncompetitiveness 2010; Meuser. Von Peinen 2013, 86.)

The second phase, the establishment of base structure includes initial cluster analysis, which means to create the base structure through a research of the current situation of the actors involved in the cluster (Cluster Navigators Ltd 2013a). The selection of the leadership group means to elect a cluster manager and an in-depth selection of board members (E4oncompetitiveness 2010). The board members acquire a high amount of responsibilities;

therefore, they ought not to be selected in urgency. (E4oncompetitiveness 2013a.)

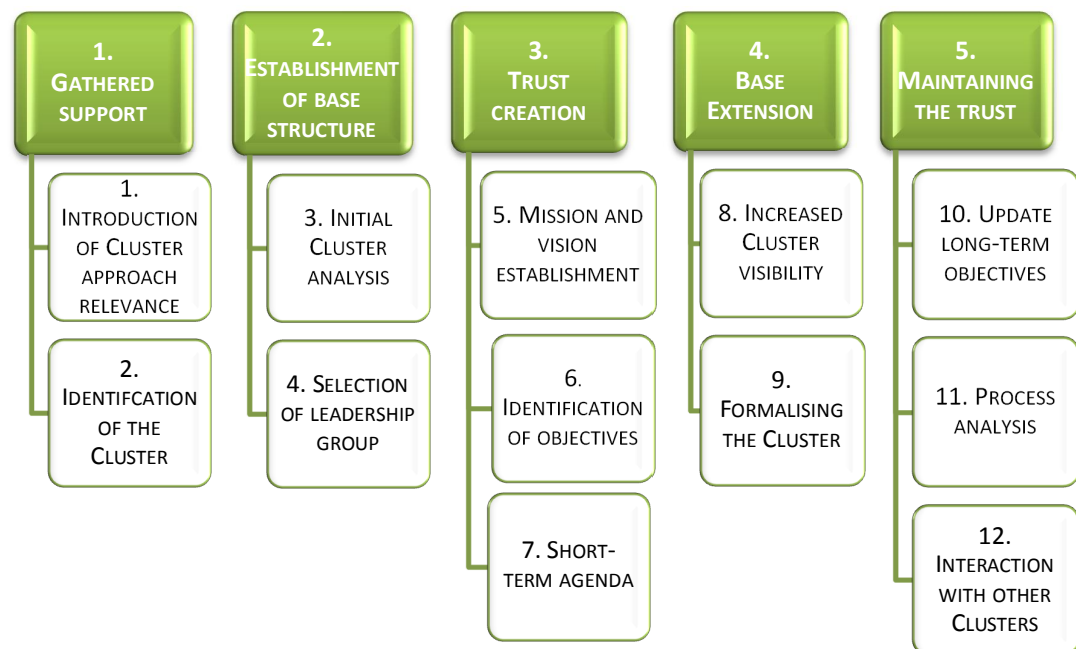
Trust creation is based on three different steps: the actors involved need to decide the vision and mission of the cluster, what it strives to achieve and why. (Cluster Navigators Ltd 2013a) Hence, the objectives of the cluster ought to be discussed in workshops to gather all opinions and enforce the best strategy (E4oncompetitiveness 2010). Furthermore, the third step is to estimate what the cluster is able to achieve in short-term without an extensive amount of resources. This step is important for the actors to attain work in the early phase. (Cluster Navigators Ltd 2013a; E4oncompetitiveness 2010.)

The eight step of the cluster development is relevant after the first objectives are achieved, that is the significance of increased visibility to improve the clusters publicity (E4oncompetitiveness 2010). Usually cluster start-ups are public agencies. However, during the development process the cluster often alter to the private sector. The transition leads to the creation of a new organisation, which takes responsibility of the cluster. Hence, a research of the competitive situation ought to be executed. Benchmarking is an efficient tool often used for this research. (E4oncompetitiveness 2013b.) It is done by the actors visiting other clusters to find out how they work. From this the actors may find new possibilities and approaches for their own cluster. (Global Benchmarking Network 2013; Porter 1990, 151.)

Since clusters often need help from the government, municipalities or educational institutions to reach their long-term objectives (E4oncompetitiveness 2010) an update in the functional long-term objectives out to me bade after the first ones have been achieved, also the consideration of collaboration partners is significant (Cluster Navigators Ltd 2013a). It is preferable to conduct a process analysis to evaluate the efficiency of the cluster, what needs to be changed and if it makes a difference in the area of action. For continued development and innovativeness in the cluster, interaction with other clusters globally and businesses locally or regionally is significant. (E4oncompetitiveness 2010.)

An efficient innovative cluster is constructed of clear agreements, limitations and opportunities, where every actor knows their duties. Although the actors in the cluster work for a common goal, each actor ought to consider the competitive advantage, what differentiates their business from the other similar businesses available in the market and within the cluster as well. Moreover, cooperation, to cooperate and compete, brings new possibilities to compete and increase the probabilities for new approaches (Ministry of Economics 2013, 3). Sub-chapter 2.4 specifies on cooperation. The significance to engage each other within the cluster and in addition, to sustain the diversity of the actors and the possibility to rapid change from strategy to action when needed. (Cluster Navigators Ltd 2013b; Porter 1990, 151.)

Table 1 'Five Phases, Twelve Steps' Framework (Cluster Navigators Ltd. 2013a)



Tourism clusters inherent sustainable development due to same values of competitive advantage and decreased use of natural resources. Additionally, culture is significant for tourism clusters. Since rich culture with traditions and heritage sights improve the competitive advantage of tourism businesses, the culture also enriches possibilities for product development. Quality of

performance, positive attitude towards tourists from staff and locals, to maintain the guest satisfaction is a crucial component in tourism clusters, correspondingly, to keep a good spirit within the cluster. (Meuser. Von Peinen 2013, 94. 95.)

### **2.3 Cross-Border Cooperation**

Cross-border region, CBR, is an area comprised by two or more countries. Since 1980 CBRs are studied and several organisations have been founded for increased cross-border cooperation between businesses in CBRs. (Perkmann. Ngai-Ling 2013, 1.) European Union founded the INTERREG initiatives in 1989 (INTERREG 2013) due to help inexperienced or uncommitted actors in cross-border cooperative situations to involve in the development process. INTERREG projects are briefly explained as cross-border projects for increased cooperation and sustainable development in the CBRs. (The European Regional Development Fund (\*) 1999, 3, 16.) CBRs are measured by an approximate distance of 50 km from the actual border into each country involved (Perkmann. Ngai-Ling, 4).

Cross-border cooperation, CBC, is actively used in Europe to enrich and sustain the CBRs qualities and culture i.e. the CBRs Haparanda in Sweden and Tornio in Finland (Ricq 2006, 17, 26). European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument acknowledged objectives for CBC, for CBRs to create mutual development plan and in addition to promote CBC in tourism, trade and research. Diminish common challenges through mutual public health, safety regulations and increased connections across the border. However, implementation of local administrations and educational institutions are preferred in CBC from the early phases. (European Neighbourhood & Partnership Instrument 2011, 11-12.) The significance of political support or neutrality from each CBR involved, as for the impossibility for a successful CBC with political disagreements (The European Regional Development Fund (\*) 1999, 16). Yet, known obstacles for CBC are language barriers, change of culture and currencies (Timothy 2006, 13). The language is considered to either bring the people closer together or further apart, in

Ylitornio . Övertorneå region Meänkieli maintained the interaction across the border after the Second World War. In addition, inhabitants of Ylitornio . Övertorneå are ashamed because of lack in skills of the border languages, Finns lack of Swedish skills and vice versa. Therefore, there is a big lack of social relation crossing the border. (Heikkilä 2005, 109.)

The definition of cross-border tourism is based on two categories. Attraction of the border, when the main purpose to visit a destination is the actual movement to cross a border (Timothy 2006, 10), i.e. the Ylitornio. Övertorneå Bridge is a popular stop for many foreign tourists where pictures are taken when they stand with one foot in Finland and the other in Sweden (Sturk 2013), whilst tourist destination near the border means when tourists arrive to the destination for the actual activities. However, the border is considered as competitive advantage compared to other destination with similar activities (Timothy 2006, 10.), as Haparanda-Tornio for shopping tourists compared to Luleå in Sweden and Rovaniemi or Oulu in Finland.

## **2.4 Coopetition**

As mentioned earlier coopetition is important for a cluster to function efficiently (Cluster Navigators Ltd 2013b; Ministry of Economics 2013, 3), coopetition is when two or more businesses are able to use cooperation and competition simultaneously (Bengtsson. Kock 2000, 411).

A good example of coopetition is Haparanda-Tornio, the neighbour municipalities to Ylitornio and Övertorneå. In 1990 Haparanda and Tornio municipalities agreed on a vision 2010, to create a twin city with cross-border cooperation. Currently the twin city has a joint tourism information Centre and a market strategy for tourism. The twin city has created possibilities with shopping centers on each side of the border, Rajalla in Tornio and IKEA . Ikano in Haparanda. (Haparanda-Tornio 2013.)

Figure 6 define the business coopetition typologies. Firstly, the number of businesses involved defines if the coopetition is a dyadic, which means two companies are involved or a network with several businesses. Secondly, the

companies level in the value chain defines the density of the cooperation. (Battista Dagnino 2009, 32. 33.) Haparanda-Tornio tourism businesses are part of complex network cooperation (Haparanda-Tornio 2013), whereas the cooperation between two hotels is a simple dyadic cooperation. During high-season it is common for safari businesses to use simple network cooperation, meaning they rent their snow-mobiles or ice-fishing props to other safari businesses when needed.

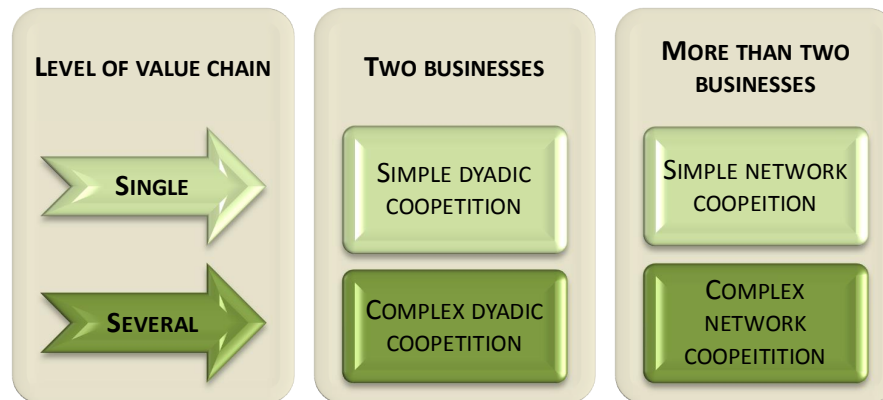


Figure 6 Business Cooperation Typologies (Battista Dagnino 2009, 32. 33)

Cooperation used in horizontal clusters increase communication between the businesses and improves the businesses search for their own competitive advantage. The businesses are committed to strive for a certain goal and work hard to gain knowledge needed to reach it. Furthermore, that results with high productivity in the cluster and increased development within each business. (Battista Dagnino 2009, 36.) For optimisation of cooperation in clusters the businesses involved are preferred to select different representatives from their businesses, which represent the competition issues of the cluster and others to represent the cooperation part (Walley, K. 2007; Bengtsson. Kock 2000, 416).

Hence, for cooperative clusters the basic definition for cooperation to cooperate and compete simultaneously, is infrequent. Since there are several actors involved in the cluster the businesses have diverse needs to compete and cooperate with different actors (Bengtsson. Eriksson. Wincent 2010, 31; Bengtsson. Kock 2000, 415), i.e. in tourism cluster accommodation

businesses are involved in a competition-dominated relationship whereas an accommodation business and a service provider are either in a cooperative-dominant relationship, where cooperation is higher than competition, or an equal relationship where both are equally distributed (Bengtsson. Kock 2000, 416).

### **3 CROSS-BORDER GREEN CARE CLUSTER: REALISATION OF RESEARCH**

#### **3.1 Commissioners**

Since the aim of the thesis project was to research the challenges and opportunities for the establishment of a cross-border Green Care Cluster, two commissioners for the thesis project was sought, one from each side of the border. The thesis project was commissioned by Ylitornio Municipality from the Finnish side, with Markku Norrena a business consultant as the contact person. Additionally, from the Swedish side, Heart of Lapland commissioned the thesis project with Eva Sturk as the contact person.

The Ylitornio Municipality has participated in Green Care Lapland projects since 2011. Two projects are in progress until 2014; Firstly, Green Care as a Part of Lappish Livelihood . Development Project, which ends in June 2014. Secondly, Green Care Expertise to Lapland . Communication Project that ends in September the same year. (Green Care Lapland 2013.) Moreover, The Ylitornio Municipality wants to develop the cooperation between the cross-border municipalities and the thesis project may improve the communication between tourism businesses in the area. Therefore, the Ylitornio Municipality was interested in commissioning the thesis project. (Norrena 2013.)

The Swedish commissioner of the thesis project was Heart of Lapland. The company includes the Tourist Information Centres from the villages of eastern side of Norrbotten; Haparanda-Tornio, Kalix, Pajala, Överkalix and Övertorneå. Heart of Lapland cooperates with tourism entrepreneurs from the villages mentioned to increase their visibility in the tourism market. (Heart of Lapland 2004.) Heart of Lapland is part of the INTERREG project North Calotte Network for Sustainable Tourism Development. The objectives of the project are to increase cooperation between the businesses involved and increase knowledge of sustainability in the Arctic area. (INTERREG IV|A|NORD 2012.) Accordingly, the thesis project reserved information for Heart of Lapland to use in the INTERREG project. Likewise Ylitornio



Municipality, Heart of Lapland desire increased cooperation between tourism entrepreneurs within Ylitornio-Övertorneå area (Sturk 2013.)

### 3.2 Involved Actors and Area Background

Figure 7 is modified from the tourism brochure of Ylitornio Municipality. The map consists of 5 numbers that illustrate the location of the thesis projects involved actors, which are all located in a radius of 60 km from the border. Below the businesses are introduced according to numerical appearance in the map.



Figure 7 Torne Valley Map (Municipality of Ylitornio 2013)

From Finland representatives from two businesses participated in the thesis project. Loma-Vietonen and Tuomisen Yrttitarha Oy, both businesses are located in Meltosjärvi, 64 km north from the centre of Ylitornio.

Tuomisen Yrttitarha Oy is located closed to Loma-Vietonen. The business consists of Marja and Lasse Tuominen who used to own Lapin Yrtti Oy, a business where different products are created by own-produced herbs. However, today Marja and Lasse specify their business to different training and programme services based on the herbal, environmental and ecological knowledge gained since 1987. (Tuomisen Yrttitarha Oy 2013; Tuominen 2013.)

Loma-Vietonen is an accommodation provider located on the shore of a big lake named Vietonen. Traditions are a great part of the business and therefore, the food offered by the company is traditional Lappish food and traditional activities are offered. There are several different activities available for each season. (Loma. Vietonen 2013.) Together with Tuomisen Yrttitarha Oy, Loma-Vietonen has developed Green Care in Meltosjärvi village.

The thesis project includes representatives from three Swedish businesses. Two businesses, Hanhivittikko Summer Pasture and Hietalas Handelsträdgård are located approximately 10 km north from Övertorneå Centre. The third business, Guesthouse Tornedalen, is located 30 km south from the centre of the village.

Hietalas Handelsträdgård is a family-owned garden centre and a high quality vegetable provider, since 1927, with greenhouse cultivation of cucumbers and tomatoes and outdoor cultivation of cabbage and broccoli. The company produces 400 tons of fresh vegetables per season and they also have a nursery-garden. Hietalas is located 11 km north of Övertorneå. (Hietalas Handelsträdgård 2013.)

Hanhivittikko Summer Pasture is a historic site located 10 km northwest of Övertorneå. It is a mixture of both Swedish and Finnish culture, during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War the Finnish side of the border was burned down and many Finns were evacuated to Hanhivittikko. The Summer Pasture is open every summer from 8 June until 31 August; it is also possible to book a visit during

low-season. All Thursdays during the summer Hanhivittikko arrange theme evenings, every week with a different theme. Yet, it is always connected to the history of Hanhivittikko and its traditions. (Hanhivittikko 2013.)

Guesthouse Tornedalen is a company that provides accommodation services in traditional houses of the Torne Valley. It is located south of Övertorneå, in the village Risudden. The houses are reconstructed and named after the families who built them, i.e. house of Anundi family and house of the Tolonen family. (Guesthouse Tornedalen 2013.)

As destinations Ylitornio and Övertorneå use similar market strategies, the key characteristics are the Arctic Circle and nature with the changing seasons, midnight sun, polar nights and aurora borealis. Tornio River is mentioned several times because it is the only free-flowing Grand River in Europe and a peaceful unique border between two countries. In addition the main activities marketed are outdoor activities in the pure nature, such as hiking, canoeing and cross-country skiing. Both municipalities declare their location as cross-border municipalities, easily accessible to each other and therefore the existence of mixed cultures. (Municipality of Ylitornio 2013; Heart of Lapland 2013a.)

Nevertheless, Ylitornio market their municipality as a great destination for fishing since Ylitornio has 160 lakes and the Tornio River. Moreover, Lapland's oldest tourism destination, which is also one of UNESCO's world heritage sites Aavasaksa Hill, is found in Ylitornio. (Municipality of Ylitornio 2013.) In addition, Övertorneå market experiences such as outdoor sauna and to experience the church with the 400 year old organ that was brought to Övertorneå from Germany where it was created in the year of 1608. (Heart of Lapland 2013a.) Yet, the history of Ylitornio church is not marketed as much despite the fact that it was built by women in the years of 1939-1940 while their husbands were at war (Ylitornio 2011a).

There is good accessibility to Ylitornio, especially in wintertime when bus connections and train connections to Lapland increases because of ski-resorts open. Train connections to Ylitornio are from southern Finland and from Kolari in the north. The closest airports are in Rovaniemi and Kemi and

with good bus connections there is a possibility to transfer from the airports to Ylitornio municipality. (Ylitornio 2011b.) Furthermore, Övertorneå also have availability for two airports, Luleå in the south and Pajala north of the municipality. Bus transports from each airport to Övertorneå are possible and other bus connections to Övertorneå from north, south and western parts of Norrbotten as well. (Heart of Lapland 2013b.)

### **3.3 Research Process and Used Methods**

#### **3.1.1 Qualitative Methods**

The aim of qualitative research is to analyse the meaning of collected results. It is used to understand the significance of an issue and its process instead of its size (Blaxter. Hughes-Tight 2010, 65). It means to analyse the concealed characteristics, why things are a certain way (Ten Have 2004, 5).

Furthermore, the number of collected information is not relevant instead analyse of results is the key aspect. In qualitative research, observation and interviews are commonly used. (Blaxter. Hughes-Tight 2010, 65.) Moreover, for qualitative research there is not only one truth. The research is based on the studies of individuals instead of the study of objects as in quantitative research. Within qualitative research the participants are carefully chosen. Firstly, the participant should have some kind of knowledge about the researched topic. Secondly, the participant should be able to answer the research question. (Erlingsson. Brysiewicz 2012, 94.)

Quantitative research, analyse of the amount of responses, is easily presented by tables. Whereas the outcome of qualitative research require innovative verbal methods to thoroughly be explained to its audience. (Bansal. Corely 2012, 511; Ten Have 2004, 4.) In qualitative research the theory and collected data are often compound. Therefore, it is recognised for its narratives (Bansal. Corely 2012, 511).

The research answer questions why and how things happen. It is used when the importance to understand an occurrence is more important than

measurements of it (Carson. Gilmore 2006, 66) e.g. when a destinations tourism decrease qualitative research would be used to research what the reason for the decrease is and what solutions there are to increase the tourism flow again.

Qualitative content analysis means to analyse the gathered materials in qualitative researches. The result from a research is an in-depth analysis of the researchers experience (Erlingsson. Brysiewicz 2012, 94) and a successful content analysis creates a holistic image of the research instead of separating the collected material into several pieces. (Sage Publications 2013, 322. 323.) In this thesis research the editing approach of qualitative content analysis is used, which means the research focuses on different subjects and the subjects are connected to create a comprehensive image of the research in a conclusion analysis (Ereaut 2002, 66).

### 3.1.2 Interviews

A brief explanation of interviews is when at least two individuals, interviewer and interviewee, together discuss the past or future experiences (Seale. Gobo. Gubrium. Silverman 2002, 16). Interviews are utilised to acknowledge understanding of individual or group perceptions. For our generation interviews are acknowledged as a basic trustworthy tool to collect information. (Fontana. Prokos 2007, 9, 11.) The collected results from interviews are considered as ~~experimental quality~~ since without the research these results would not have been compiled (Ten Have 2004, 5).

The traditional unstructured interviews are based on the ethnographic approach (Fontana. Prokos 2007, 39), which means the questions are open-ended to acquire the interviewees elaborated answers. This approach is often linked together with observation. (Denzin. Lincoln 2000, 252, 652.) Furthermore, it is important for the interviewer to gain the interviewees trust because it effects on the interview questions outcome (Seale. Gobo. Gubrium. Silverman 2002, 19). If trust exists between the two parts, the interviewee shares personal matters with the interviewer, which the interviewer needs to respect and shall not take for granted (Ten Have 2004, 57. 58).

### 3.1.3 SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis is used to distinguish the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats within an organisation (Gerson. Shotwell 1991, 24). Strengths and Weaknesses are internal features that are either supportive or unsupportive for the organisation to reach its objectives and goals. Whereas Opportunities and Threats are the external supportive or unsupportive features for the organisations strive to reach the objectives and goals. (Chen. Bruniski 2013, 1.)

SWOTs are an efficient tool since its simple layout, which briefly clarifies the options without an extensive analyse (Friend. Zehle 2004, 85). Moreover, SWOTs are used in a wide range within organisations for e.g. evaluations, development of strategic planning, competitor evaluations and development of competitive advantage (Chen-Bruniski 2013, 1; Gerson. Shotwell 1991, 24).

## 3.4 Analysing and Interpreting Results

### 3.4.1 Green Care Findings

Henceforth the actors are referred to as interviewees because of confidentiality issues. The interviewees are not in same numerical order as their businesses were referred to in figure 7. This section analyses the interview results and interprets the challenges and opportunities for a cross-border Green Care Cluster in the CBRsqYlitornio and Övertorneå.

Question 5 in the interview (see appendices) asked if Green Care is a new term for the interviewee. The replies were homogenous, the term itself is new, yet, the concept is old. Green Care is regarded as an interesting and up-to-date concept that tourists and local visitors would appreciate. Moreover, four of the interviewees considered that their businesses have used Green Care long before the concept was even created. One of the businesses had participated in the development of organic farm tourism several years ago (Interview 5 2013) and another has offered traditional

outdoor activities such as kick sledging and ice fishing to the visitors (Interview 3 2013).

The words in figure 8 describe what interviewees firstly associated with the words Green Care. Interviewee 2 first thought consisted of Green Cargo Freights but when relating Green Care to Tourism the first thought attached positive reaction towards the approach and the need for it to develop in the area. Although a continued question of how it ought to be developed was asked, no concrete solution was declared. The care and power of Green is reflected as a key characteristic that brings tourists to the municipalities. In Ylitornio . Övertorneå the tourists are close to nature at all times, there are forest surroundings and peaceful lakes to visit and the Tornio River. The appreciation of silence and easy outdoor experiences such as tree hugging for increased well-being was mentioned by an interviewee (Interview 3 2013). These experiences are easily connected to figure 1 and 2, it is clearly stated by Interviewee 3 how the observation is not enough for tourists anymore and that the tourists' well-being improves when interacting with nature elements by for example hugging a tree.

As Green Care products and services are experience-based, the value for the event is in the eye of the participant. One of the interviewees mentioned that feel of security for the participant is very significant, likewise the feeling of belonging (Interview 5 2013). These two emotions bring the experience added authentic value, as discussed in 2.1.3. Furthermore, interviewee 4 connected Green treatments and rehabilitation, which includes in the passive experience of nature, with Green Care at first thought, as the other interviewees mentioned Green treatments at some point during the interviews. At the moment Green treatments are used by Tuomisen Yritytarha Oy and Loma-Vietonen, but all the actors involved in the research are able to develop Green treatments for their businesses. As interviewee 1 stated Green Care sounds beautiful to hear and enhances influences for improved well-being and care for nature, oneself and mankind.



Figure 8 Interviewees' First Thoughts of Green Care

### 3.4.2 Sustainability Findings

As for sustainability, Interviewee 1 uttered that if a business at any level values sustainability, it should be seen through the eye of a visitor, otherwise it does not exist. Two interviewees mentioned that cultural and social sustainability are the most significant for their businesses at the moment. However, the environmental sustainability is always considered. Especially for the small businesses in the area the economic sustainability is the sustainability aspect which is last pondered, as one interviewee indicated. The business was created to provide the tourists and visitors experiences, *to put a smile on their faces*. The greatest wealth is not money, it is to be able to make someone else truly happy. (Interview 1 2013.) Hence, since the businesses in Ylitornio . Övertorneå are relatively small, a critical characteristic is for the employees to care for the tourists and visitors and to make them feel as if they experience something special, memorable and to treat them with great hospitality.

Two interviewees measured sustainability only from the environmental aspect and for that reason their views on their current sustainability situation were negative. However, both businesses have cultural and social sustainability as well, which they did not recognise. Interviewee 2 mentioned



their business to have a Green certificate but it may not be clearly seen for the consumers. When developing Green Care Tourism at any level, the different sustainability phases are worthy comprehensive consideration. Green Care is a good approach to start the development process of becoming sustainable.

### 3.4.3 Cluster Findings

Four of the five interviewees mentioned the significance of networking because the businesses in the municipalities are small and therefore not able to do everything alone. Networking provides extensive availability of options for wider visibility and development of new products and services that would not be possible for a small business to accomplish alone. (Interview 1 2013; Interview 2 2013; Interview 3 2013; Interview 5 2013.)

Currently two of the five businesses involved in the thesis project use tourism networks in their businesses, one from both countries (Interview 3 2013; Interview 4 2013). The Finnish business is a part of Rovaniemi Tourism Marketing Organisation, whereas the Swedish business participates in the North Calotte Network for Sustainable Tourism Development, the same INTERREG project as the commissioner Heart of Lapland is part of.

The term cluster was familiar for two interviewees beforehand, whereas one related the term cluster with geographical networks i.e. a network between businesses in a small village is a cluster according to the interviewee (Interview 4 2013). Contrariwise it is more common that businesses interpret clusters as networks. For instance, interviewee 4 firstly answered their business use networks, however, after a brief discussion of the differences between clusters and networks (see page 13) they realised their interactions to be clusters.

Hence, one of the interviewees recognised their cooperation with local businesses that creates market events in the centre of the municipality as a cluster. They work together to create old-fashioned markets which have become a meeting spot for several elderly people. Another interviewee acknowledged their cooperation with neighbouring businesses, in their village, for common product development to be a cluster (Interview 5 2013).

Personal chemistry is contemplated as the main characteristic in networks but heterogeneous views on the significance of personal chemistry within clusters was discovered. Whilst three interviewees agreed that personal chemistry is the key aspect in clusters as well (Interview 2 2013; Interview 3 2013; Interview 5 2013), other two explained their views on clusters to be professional cooperation for a common goal where thorough planning and share of responsibility are the key aspects (Interview 1 2013; Interview 4 2013). One interviewee mentioned that participation in a cluster may be a good option to discover personal chemistry between other actors and from there new networks may be developed (Interview 1 2013).

#### 3.4.4 Cross-border Cooperation Findings

Although the border between Finland and Sweden is not a barrier, it seems as if the awareness of what happens within tourism in each country does not affect the other one. Interviewee 1 and 3 equally reflected the lack of knowledge of tourism businesses in the other country. Currently the tourism businesses in both municipalities run their own national races not dependent on each other or even concerned of the happenings on the borders other side. However, with CBC the businesses are able to develop products to market in both countries and the actors involved improves their visibility and together they produce a cross-border destination image for the municipalities (Pesämaa, Eriksson 2010, 170).

The language barrier between the countries has been used as an excuse for too long. Even if the actors do not speak the other language fluently Meänkieli have affected both countries significantly through the skills of understanding the other language, that results in many conversations where the people involved from opposite countries talk their own languages and still understand each other. (Interview 5 2013.) In the future the CBC might result with greater understanding of the other language across the border, meaning Finns would be more comfortable to speak Swedish and vice versa.

#### 3.4.5 Green Care Cluster Findings

Three interviewees expressed their interest to participate in a cross-border Green Care Cluster immediately (Interview 1 2013; Interview 3 2013;

Interview 5 2013). The main motivation to join the cluster was the opportunity to together develop and offer Green Care products and services in the area and to begin to build a comprehensive image of a cross-border destination as well. It is an extraordinary opportunity for tourists to experience two cultures in one destination. The other two interviewees stated not accurate timing the as the reason for unable participation. In addition, both indicated that if possible their businesses desire to participate in the near and both also believed the timing for the actual cluster itself is currently relevant. (Interview 2 2013; Interview 4 2013.)

For the actors to learn to know each other and to find shared values for the main focus of the cluster were homogenously mentioned as significant features of the early phase of the cluster process. The goal and objectives need careful planning, as mentioned in table 1, also the discussion of quality level, which needs to be fulfilled throughout the whole product or service i.e. the market methods used to market the product, ought to reflect the product and acquire a strengthened pre-experience for the tourists and visitors (Interview 5 2013). Furthermore, the dishes and cutleries for food services require planning as well, disposable dishes or wooden plates and cutleries for increased authenticity of the experience (Interview 4 2013). In addition, the decision of target groups and also the language used in the product and services developed in the cluster needs consideration (Interview 3 2013).

Nevertheless, the decision of a common goal is considered as a challenge, to find the goal that all actors desire to strive for with same requirements (Interview 2 2013; Interview 3 2013; Interview 4 2013). The equal quality level throughout the product might be difficult to measure since there are several actors involved with a variety of businesses (Interview 1 2013; Interview 3 2013). For this challenge an interviewee found the solution by use of a test group to evaluate the product and its quality before marketing begins (Interview 3 2013). The language is considered as a challenge however, not the main challenge. Currently it might be a hinder which slows the process however, not an impossible obstacle to overcome since there are several actors involved and language obstacles are tackled together by translation from Finnish to Swedish and vice versa (Interview 5 2013). As to enlighten

the actors in the cluster that language obstacles are tackled together eases the tension between the actors from both countries, since there are actors that speak the other language fluently or almost fluently, and they are able to act as translators when needed.

As Table 1 explained the cluster development process included the essential fourth step, to choose the leader group of the cluster. The decision ought to clarify the share of responsibilities within the cluster, as two interviewees required the share to be made as early in the process as possible (Interview 1 2013; Interview 5 2013). Furthermore, the board members of the cluster ought to be selected in accordance to the amount of responsibilities the actors are prepared to work with in the cluster. Another issue significant to remember is that the cluster manager is not a project leader, which means the manager is not responsible to follow-up that all actors are undertaking their duties. Additionally, cooptition was mentioned in the cluster development process, it was mentioned by an interviewee as an effective approach. The boundaries of where competition and where cooperation is used were seen as significant factors to succeed with a cooptitive cluster (Interview 1 2013). Three interviewees discussed the trust of not copycatting each other's ideas instead brainstorming together for development ideas for all businesses involved to gain efficient results (Interview 1 2013; Interview 3 2013; Interview 5 2013).

Interviewee 5 shared the idea of a two day excursion, one day in Finland and the other in Sweden, for all actors interested in the cluster to learn to know each other and at the same time to familiarise to each business. During the excursion some ideas for a common goal for the cluster may appear or other objectives for the cooperation. By the visits to each business all actors are able to create a comprehensive image of the cooperation and what the cross-border cluster may be able to achieve. Another reason for the excursion would be to familiarise to the work culture of the other country. Even though the businesses are located nearby each other there are two countries involved with different work cultures. Yet, both municipalities have mixtures of each country but the differences still exist. One of the Finnish representatives compared the Finnish quick business meetings with Swedish meeting were

discussions might take a whole day. Although it may not seem significant in the beginning, these features are important to consider if actual cluster meetings take place.

Two interviewees considered wintertime as the hectic period of the year and therefore, the time effort to put into the cluster differentiate along with the seasonal changes (Interview 1 2013; Interview 3 2013). All agreed that time used in the beginning of the cluster is important for it to develop preferably. If there is not time to meet and organise the base for the cluster, it is not worth to do at all.

#### 3.4.6 Concluding Analysis

When building the base for a cross-border Green Care Cluster in Ylitornio . Övertorneå the peak-seasons ought to be respected. Since the process to build a cluster needs time and effort from the actors it cannot succeed done in a hurry. Not to stress increase personal well-being and to work in the cluster ought to be interesting, fun and worth the time spent on it. Therefore, the optional time for building the base is during low-season of tourism, late spring and the beginning of summer. For the horizontal cluster to work efficiently the cooperation ought to be in balance between all actors. Obviously different relationships appear between the businesses yet, the cluster cannot let the competition devour the cooperation because that would lead to an end of the cluster and the CBC would go back to the way it is at the moment. In other words, a complex cluster cooperation is desired (see figure 6).

CBC has existed between Ylitornio . Övertorneå tourism businesses before. After it ended the businesses from both Finland and Sweden discussed to resurrect the CBC however, no one has taken thoughts into action yet. A reputation of Torne Valley found in Sweden, is that people in the area are known to not be capable of cooperation and this is an issue worth reflection, is the lack of CBC blamed on the location in the Torne Valley. Do the people in Torne Valley envy each other so much it destroys the opportunities of developing a cross-border destination. Hence, Haparanda-Tornio, which is also located in the Torne Valley, established the twin city concept with joint

marketing and they are currently developing a Barents Centre on the border (Haparanda-Tornio 2013, 14).

Furthermore, a stable base is significant, and for a Green Care Cluster an opportunity for the clear base could be this statement, *if you truly care about yourself, you also care about the nature*(Interview 2 2013). By considering the statement in every decision made in the cluster the outcomes automatically fit as Green Care products, services or experiences.

Two of five interviewees expressed the anxiety of having to be the driving force (Interview 2 2013; Interview 4 2013), which is concerning since all actors involved ought to desire to strive for the goal together, everyone are supposed to be driving forces not only one actor. All businesses involved in a cluster are equally important and as one interviewee stated, all businesses are the centre for their own cluster involvement and creation of new networks (Interview 1 2013). Additionally, one interviewee with earlier experience in Green Care expressed the will to be the contact person for the cluster and already showed a good location where meetings might be held. This gesture uttered the desire and need for CBC and destination development in the region. In addition, the two businesses with earlier knowledge of Green Care were positive to share their know-how with the other actors and develop the region together.

Green Care is a known concept in southern Europe and therefore, the concept is relevant for Ylitornio . Övertorneå region as well, since in peak-season the main tourists arrive from southern Europe. Many tourism businesses in Swedish Norrbotten work hard to earn the label of *Naturens bästa* meaning *the best for nature* yet, the label is only known in Sweden and therefore, it does increase the quality of the businesses for foreign tourists (Interview 4 2013). The businesses could develop Green Care alongside with *Naturens bästa* to improve their market outside of Sweden as well.

The topic of Green Care is preferable to introduce to the locals if the CBRsq commit to destination development through the concept. Both municipalities prefer locality and by introducing Green Care to the locals it would increase

the support for the cluster along with strengthened destination image. A Green Care event in Hanhivittikko Summer Pasture where all actors are present and offer both passive experiences of nature, such as green treatments, and interaction with natural elements through social horticulture activities or horticultural therapy would be a possible way to introduce the concept for locals. An effective way to reach the locals is to market the event in the local newspapers Meän Tornionlaakso in Ylitornio and Övertorneå Nytt in Övertorneå. Meän Tornionlaakso already cooperates with Tuomisen Yrttitarha Oy and therefore, Green Care articles have been written previously.

Table 2 is a SWOT analysis of the situation in Ylitornio . Övertorneå. The strengths are location, accessibility, rich culture, good Green Care businesses in the area and good quality products and services between the actors. There are several businesses in the municipalities and in the whole Torne Valley region that offer good quality products and services, and are possible Green Care actors. Since the region have rich culture and a variety of tourism businesses that are able to work with Green Care Tourism, a future scenario is that the cluster would develop to Torne Valley Green Care Cluster. The rich culture also provides the experience of three languages in an area with the radius of 60 km from the border, Finnish, Meänkieli and Swedish. Although, the interviewees only stated the different languages as obstacles it is a competitive advantage compared to other similar destinations. For tourists to experience all three languages and even learn a sentence in Meänkieli increases the memorable authentic experience. For that reason, Meänkieli ought to be revived instead of forgotten. This is an advantage since Meänkieli is only used in Torne Valley and when the tourists remember a sentence in Meänkieli and expresses this in their hometowns in Finland, Sweden or abroad the language is always connected to Torne Valley, a specific area in the cross-border region of Finland and Sweden.

As mentioned in section 2.3 the cross-border location of the municipalities expand the competitive advantage of the offerings in the destination compared to other destinations with similar product and service offers.

Although the municipalities are small they offer decent accessibility to and from the destination (see page 22. 23), the distance to nearest airports ought to be considered as increased quality for the destinations. Since they offer pure nature and silence and the travel to Ylitornio . Övertorneå already creates memorable experiences.

Moreover the possibility to plan the travel by arriving to the municipalities from Sweden and depart through Finland or vice versa strengthens the image of CBRsq and improves the destinations competitive advantage as noted in page 17. Additionally, the routes around Torne Valley, described in figure 9, strengthen the possibility for memorable cross-border experiences. The distance between the actors are obviously greater than in cities, yet the landscape along the way offer passive experience of nature.

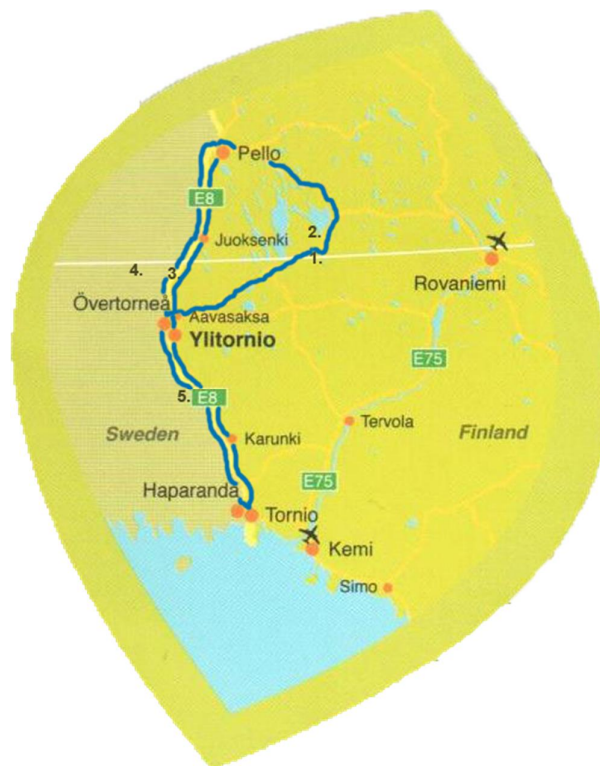


Figure 9 Torne Valley Routes (based on the brochure Municipality of Ylitornio 2013)

The weaknesses recognised in the SWOT analysis are the actors being afraid of responsibility, language barrier and common time for meeting. Two interviewees worried about the need of being the driving force, between the lines it was seen that responsibility issues scared their interest of participation in the cluster. Positively the actors recognised their state of mind



and clarified their involvement is not relevant at the moment. Yet, when creating a cluster, an actor may participate with the same state of fear and it will have a negative impact on the development of the cluster.

Although the language barrier is not considered as an impossible obstacle anymore it still will slow the cluster process, especially in the beginning. The actors involved might as interviewee 5 expressed be afraid of language barriers, which will result with difficulties that would not be present without preconceptions. Referring to pages 16. 17, social relations in the cross-border region have been hindered because of language barriers for several years and without a change in inhabitants' state of mind it will not be changed. Therefore, a change in the mind-set of businesses involved in the cluster might have a greater affect in the regions development and result with more open-minded inhabitants.

Common time for meeting is a challenge for the businesses and it has been used as an excuse along with the language barrier. However, the actors ought to reflect on the CBC cluster as a part of their business instead of a project aside of the business (Interview 1 2013). By this the outcome of the cluster will be efficient and the CBC may develop to the level of destination image.

As mentioned earlier the expanding to whole Torne Valley is a significant opportunity for the Green Care Cluster. It would increase the visibility of the businesses as a part of a cross-border destination. Referring to page 8, the possibility to market the cross-border destination in domestic markets would increase the economic productivity in the destination and in this case the domestic market includes both Finnish and Swedish tourism market. Through the cluster new cross-border networks and products for all seasons may be developed. As table 1 stated the support from municipalities to sponsor the cluster results with greater possibility to reach the clusters goals. Additionally, the support from the municipalities may lead to developed CBC in the cluster and the CBC may spread to other tourism businesses in the region as well.

Recognised threats are that history repeats itself and competition devours cooperation completely. Therefore, the balance between cooperation and

coopetition is significant in the cluster and to simplify the search for balance the relationships between the actors involved needs to be labelled to cooperation-dominated, equal or competition-dominated relationships. This would lead to an even worse situation that the CBRsq currently are experiencing. Additionally, the cluster is perishable goods, which mean it needs to be cared for otherwise it will be ruined (Interview 1 2013). The cluster ought to be taken care of by each member involved not only the cluster manager and the board members.

Table 2 SWOT Analysis



## 4 DISCUSSION

The thesis project started in the beginning of 2013. It has been an educative year working with the research. The theoretical background search started in the summer. Yet, most of the work was conducted between September and November. Limitations were made along the process, firstly the plan was to actually organise a workshop where the actors could meet and begin brainstorming ideas about the Green Care Cluster. However, the lack of time made the author change the specification of the research to the individual face-to-face interviews only. Since the change of specification, the observation part of the research was also removed because the interview questions were sent to the interviewees in advance, which automatically affected the authenticity of the observation results.

Qualitative research methods were the correct approach to use in matter to reach the aim of the thesis, which was to identify the interest for a cross-border Green Care Cluster in the municipalities. Additionally, to find what motivate businesses to participate in a cross-border interaction and what the challenges and opportunities for the cluster are. The same interview questions were asked from each interviewee and if the author did not reach the level of information needed complementary questions were asked. All interviewees understood the concept perfectly and many answers were similar, therefore the research can be considered reliable and valid. Additionally, the situation of cross-border interaction between the businesses has been the same for several years.

Challenges in the research were to find theories of Green Care Tourism since it is a new concept. Additionally another challenge for the author was to keep the research narrowed to her home municipalities Ylitornio . Övertorneå, since to develop whole Torne Valley region is of her interest.

Since both municipalities market their destinations based on nature, Green Care is the optional concept to develop the destination image. Hence, it is important to remember that Green Care alone does not resemble Tourism, to connect these concepts Green Care Tourism ought to be used. As for this research, one actor is not a tourism business therefore the term "Tourismq

was removed from the title. The current state of CBC in Ylitornio . Övertorneå within tourism businesses is non-existing. Yet, the businesses express a desire for CBC for increased destination value along with improved visibility worldwide through a cross-border destination. To reach the CBC a cluster is an effective approach and by connecting Green Care with it the municipalities marketing themselves as nature based destinations are able to strengthen that vision. Although all interviewees stated the desire for increased cooperation nothing has happened yet, they wait for a driving force to push the businesses together instead of creating cooperation with each other by own initiatives.

Continued researches based on this thesis project could be specified on CBC in Torne Valley, Green Care Tourism in the region or Green Care businesses in the area in overall. In addition the possibility to search for EU funding and create an INTERREG project of cross-border Green Care for developing destination image in the Torne Valley is possible.

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**APPENDICES**

Questions for Interviews (English)	Appendix 1
Questions for Interviews and Glossary (Finnish)	Appendix 2
Question for Interviews and Glossary (Swedish)	Appendix 3

**QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS**

## Appendix 1

**Clustering:**

1. Is the company using networking now? Or has it used networking before? What are your thoughts about networking? Advantages and disadvantages?
2. Have you ever considered clustering instead of networking? What are your thoughts about it? What could be the advantages and disadvantages of clustering?
3. Would your company be interested in cross-border cooperation? Why? Why not?

**Green Care:**

4. Does the company take Sustainability into consideration? How is it seen in the business? If not, why?
5. Have you ever considered green care before? Or is it a new concept for your company?
6. What thoughts arise when you hear the term ~~Green Care~~?

**The Green Care Cluster:**

7. What would motivate entrepreneurs to create/participate in a cross-border Green Care Cluster?\*
8. What would your company want to achieve within the cluster?\*
9. What would be the main challenge among the entrepreneurs in the Cluster? What could be a solution for this problem?\*
10. How much effort would your company be ready to put into the cluster, to make it work?\*
11. Why is the company not interested in participating in the cluster? \*\* is it because of:
  - Green care?
  - The cross-border cluster?
  - The timing? Is it too early for this change? Is it something that might be relevant in the future? If so, when and why not now?

\* If the interviewee seems interested in participating in the green care cluster, these questions will be asked. \*\* If the interviewee does not seem interested in the idea of creating a green care cluster, these questions will be asked.

**Haastattelukysymykset**

## Appendix 2

**Yhteisö/Klusteri:**

1. Käyttääkö yrityksenne verkostointia tällä hetkellä? Vai oletteko käyttäneet verkostointia aiemmin? Millaisia ajatuksia teillä on verkostoitumisesta? Mitkä ovat hyvät puolet / huonot puolet?
2. Oletteko koskaan harkinneet yhteisöä verkostoinnin sijaan? Mitä ajattelette tästä? Mitkä voisivat olla hyvät / huonot puolet yhteisössä?
3. Olisiko teidän yrityksenne kiinnostunut yhteistyöstä rajan molemmin puolin? Miksi? Miksi ei?

**Green Care:**

1. Harkitsetteko kestäväää kehitystä yrityksessänne? Miten se näkyy? Jos ei ole harkittu, miksi ei?
2. Oletteko koskaan harkinneet Green Care:ä aiemmin? Vai onko tämä teille uusi termi?
3. Mikä on ensimmäinen ajatus, kun kuulette termin **Green Care**?

**Green Care Yhteisö/Klusteri:**

1. Mikä motivoisi yrittäjiä osallistumaan rajoja ylittävään Green Care-yhteisöön?\*
2. Mitä teidän yrityksenne haluaisi saavuttaa osallistumalla yhteisöön?\*
3. Mikä olisi suurin haaste yritysten keskuudessa kyseisessä yhteisössä? Mikä voisi olla ratkaisu tähän haasteeseen?\*
4. Kuinka paljon aikaa olisitte valmiit panostamaan tähän yhteisöön, jotta se alkaisi toimia? \*
5. Miksei yrityksenne ole kiinnostunut osallistumaan yhteisöön? \*\*  
onko syynä:
  - Green care?
  - Yhteisö, joka ylittää rajan?
  - Aika? Onko liian aikaista tehdä tämä muutos? Olisiko yhteisö mahdollinen tulevaisuudessa? Jos on, koska ja mikä pitäisi muuttua? Miksei nyt?

Jos haastateltava vaikuttaa kiinnostuneelta osallistumaan Green Care-yhteisöön \*Jos haastateltava ei vaikuta kiinnostuneelta osallistumaan Green Care-yhteisöön \*\*

**SANASTO**

## Appendix 2

**Green Care**

Green Care käyttää luonnollisia komponentteja tuottamaan terveyden, sosiaalisen ja opetuksen hyötyjä (Haubenhofer, Elings, Hassink, Hine 2010, 106).

Green Care on alustavasti luotu maanviljelyä varten, mutta viime aikoina se on myös otettu huomioon eri yritysalueilla. Nykyään Green Care löytyy terveydenhuollosta, koulutuksista sekä matkailusta. Green Care on uusi konsepti sekä Suomessa että Ruotsissa.

Green Care:n liittyy kolme tärkeää osaa:

- 1) Luonto, jota käytetään vahvistamaan ja parantamaan terapian ja kuntoutuksen tuloksia. Tämä ei tarkoita että täytyy olla luonnossa, sillä luonto voidaan tuoda esim. sairaaloihin.
- 2) Kestävä kehitys on kehitystä, joka tyydyttää nykyhetken tarpeet viemättä tulevilta sukupolvilta mahdollisuutta tyydyttää omat tarpeensa (Brundtland Commission, United Nations 1987).
- 3) Verkosto, jossa osallistujat saavat jakaa prosessin etenemistä muiden kanssa. Verkostoituminen pitäisi olla tärkein osa Green Care:ssä ja tukea kahta aiempaa osaa.

**Verkosto / Verkostoituminen**

Verkosto on kuin liitto, jossa on erilaisia sosiaalisia osallistujia, esim. yksittäisiä ihmisiä, organisaatioita ja yrityksiä. Verkostoon osallistuvat yrittävät yhdessä saavuttaa yhteistä tavoitettaan.

**Yhteisö/Klusteri**

Yhteisö rakentuu yrityksistä, jotka liittyvät samaan arvoketjuun, jossa tuotteita palveluita sekä innovaatioita kehitetään. Useat yhteisöt saavat alkunsa verkostoista ja yhteisön edetessä uusia verkostoja syntyy osallistujien kesellä.

**INTERVJU FRÅGOR**

Appendix 3

**Kluster:**

1. Använder ert företag nätverk för tillfället? Eller har ni använt det tidigare? Vad är era tankar om nätverk? Fördelar / Nackdelar?
2. Har ni någon gång tänkt på kluster istället för nätverk? Vad har ni för tankar om den möjligheten? Vad skulle vara fördelarna / nackdelarna med ett kluster?
3. Skulle ert företag vara intresserad av samarbete mellan turistföretag över gränsen? Varför/varför inte?

**Green Care:**

1. Är hållbarhet ett viktigt ämne för ert företag? Hur syns det inom företaget? Om inte, varför?
2. Har ni någon gång funderat över Green Care? Eller, är detta ett nytt koncept för ert företag?
3. Vad för tankar får ni när ni hör termen Green Care?

**Green Care Kluster:**

1. Vad skulle motivera företagare att delta i ett Green Care kluster som samarbetar över gränsen? \*
2. Vad skulle ert företag vilja åstadkomma inom detta kluster? \*
3. Vad vore största utmaningen mellan företagarna inom detta kluster? Hur skulle denna utmaning möjligtvis lösas? \*
4. Hur mycket tid skulle ert företag vara beredda på att tillägna klustret för att få det att fungera? \*
5. Varför är ert företag inte intresserad av att delta i detta kluster? är det på grund av:
  - Green Care?
  - Kluster med fokus på samarbetet över gränsen
  - Tidspunkten? Är det för tidigt för detta samarbete? Skulle detta vara relevant i framtiden? Om ja, varför då och inte nu?

\*Om intervjuade verkar intresserad av att delta i green care klustret. \*\* Om intervjuade inte verkar intresserad av att delta i green care klustret.



## ORDLISTA

## Appendix 3

### Green Care

Green Care betyder att man använder naturliga komponenter för att förbättra utbildningar, välmående eller sociala förmågor (Haubenhofer, Elings, Hassink, Hine 2010, 106)..

Green Care är ett koncept gjort för lantbruk. Men under senaste tiden har Green Care konceptet anpassats till flera olika industrier, så som sjukvård, utbildningar och turism. Green Care är dock ett nytt koncept inom turism i både Finland och Sverige.

Det finns tre viktiga komponenter inom Green Care;

- 1) Naturen, den används för att stärka och förbättra resultaten av terapi och rehabilitering. Dock är det inte ett måste att vara ute i naturen, naturen kan nämligen tas till tex, patienten på ett sjukhus.
- 2) Att få uppleva, fynda och vara kreativ med naturen för att förbättra resultaten av rehabiliteringen.
- 3) Nätverket som deltagaren delar sin process inom. Nätverket bör vara den starkaste komponenten inom green care och stödja de andra två.

### Hållbarhet

Kortfattat är hållbarhet: att tillfredsställa dagens behov utan att riskera att framtida generationers möjligheter att tillfredsställa deras behov förstöras (Brundtland Commission, United Nations 1987).

### Nätverk

Ett nätverk är likt en allians. Det är byggt av olika sociala deltagare, så som privat personer, företag och organisationer. Nätverk påbörjas för att effektivare kunna åstadkomma gemensamma mål.

### Kluster

Kluster är en struktur som är uppbyggd av företag som är sammanhörande via värdekedjan av produkter, tjänster och innovationer. Grunden till ett nytt kluster är oftast flera nätverk och genom samarbetet inom klustren växer nya nätverk fram mellan deltagarna.