




HARVESTING REGIONAL INNOVATION CAMPS 2013



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Camp summaries along publication.

INTRODUCTION

CAMPS 2013

KAINUU REGION AND OULU REGION
FORSSA REGION
LAPLAND
CENTRAL AND NORTH KARELIA
SOUTHEAST FINLAND

Finnish rural areas are being developed locally, and with great spirit. Challenges run ahead of local development strategies and carrying out changes requires novel ideas. Regional innovation camps address rural development and focus on introducing practical solutions and new measures to implement local strategies.

The Rural Network Unit in Finland decided to test regional innovation camps as tools for developing rural areas during 2013 and 2014. The main goal of the camps is to **produce and point out new innovations**, according to regional and local development strategies, and also **improve and create new models for cooperation** between regional experts, developers and entrepreneurs. In addition, innovation camps are used to outline the strengths of rural areas in fostering innovations, marketing the potential of rural development programmes in developing innovations and introducing a holistic learning process refining the concept of innovation camp. Innovation camps broaden the repertoire of rural development methods by demonstrating novel working methods and specific tools.

A total of five innovation camps were carried out in 2013. This leaflet sums up the experiences and insights of the impact and success of innovation camps through the eyes of local organisers, participants, experts and camp juries. This small story presents five innovation camps and the ideas produced during the camps. In addition, this leaflet includes an analysis of the suitability of innovation camp as a measure for developing rural areas. This leaflet is based on data collected by an online survey and a set of interviews during March and April 2014.



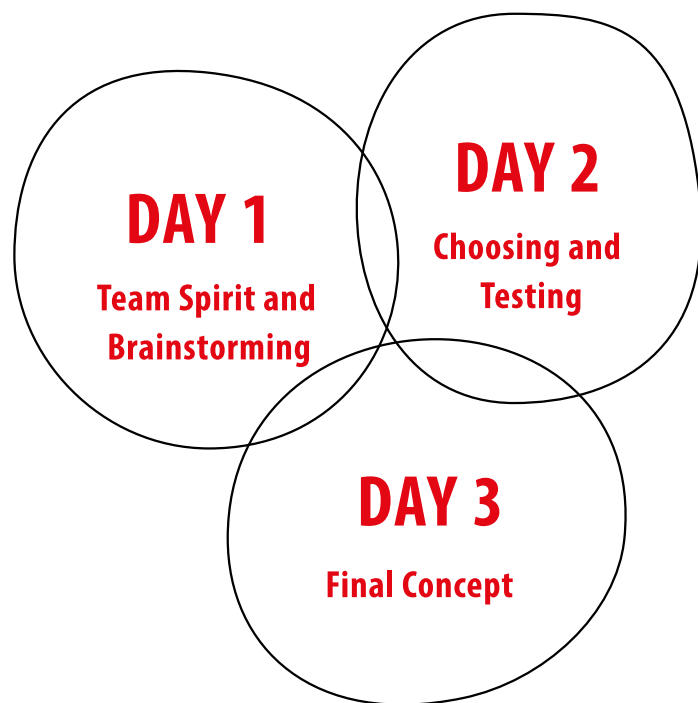
Päivi Kujala
Rural Network Unit



Tommi Ranta
MDI

TURNING RURAL INNOVATIONS UPSIDE DOWN AT GRASS ROOT LEVEL

The aim of the 48 hour regional innovation camp is to create new ideas to develop rural areas as well as challenge and develop the people, economy and networks of rural areas. Every innovation camp is implemented based on the bottom-up needs of the region, as the development of rural areas is in the hands of the local players. The camp consists of three phases and is carried out in three days. Participants work in 4 or 5 thematic groups of 6 to 8 people.



DAY 1. Team Spirit and Brainstorming. Start by lunch. Getting to know each other, teambuilding to create team spirit. Brainstorming (producing dozens of ideas around the given theme) and outlining great challenges and possibilities.

DAY 2. Choosing and Testing. Choosing the idea to be further developed in the morning. Testing and conceptualizing the idea (e.g. sales pitch, business model canvas) for the rest of the day. External sparring partners asking difficult questions.

The second day is magical. At the end of the day groups make a play (theatre, dance, singing) about the journey they have gone through during the camp. Creative plays describe both the frustration and pleasure of pursuing and developing the idea.

DAY 3. Final Concept. Finalising the concept of the idea, presenting it to others, board of judges, invited guests and media. Final lunch.



EPILOGUE

Regional innovation camps are the Big Bang of intensive rural development. Innovation camps gather together people in rural areas who are eager to develop and have an impact on their local environment. Enthusiasm bubbles out from the camp atmosphere and from the fact that development is focused on practical and concrete issues. To give wings to camp spirit and ideas, camps should be integrated as a part of resident and doer-based rural development.

COMPACT.

An innovation camp can be implemented as a compact session focusing on developing business ideas or as a more open event focusing on screening new development perspectives. Ideas are only developed after the intensive three days at the camp if there is a planned process to take care of the ideas after the camp. (Please see section: Lessons to be learned).

READY, STEADY, GO!

Innovation camps are a magnificent kick-start for development. Camps provide the basis for setting up practical development initiatives. For example, the Granny's place initiative was developed to the point, where it was easy to make practical decisions and the first steps after the camp.

PEOPLE.

Innovation camps are all about people. In Lapland, some said that the camp produces new people. Selecting participants is of great importance and therefore invitations should be sent well in advance. The selection process should emphasise heterogeneity, innovativeness and courage. It is important to include young, future key actors to the planning process for example through cooperation with universities or schools. Many of the issues in the innovation camps seek long-term impacts, and therefore people who are dealing with the issues in the future should be in the discussions.

GLUE.

One of the goals of the camp is to gather together rural developers and people willing to have an impact on their own living environment. All the camps in 2013 were successful in these terms.



ENTHUSIASM.

Enthusiasm wells from people and from the willingness to do things a bit differently. Some of the participants might be inflexible, inverted, outgoing or less bureaucratic by nature, but the camp makes everything possible. Common enthusiasm starts the first day at the camp and climaxes with the presentations on the third day. The camp enthusiasm does not relent immediately. Thus, many of the ideas and the camp spirit i.e. good memories remain.

CONCRETE AND PRACTICAL.

In the long run, innovation camps have managed to produce novel thinking related to local development strategies. Many of the ideas discussed at the camp present new actions for the implementation of strategies. The further development of ideas boosts tackling identified challenges.

EMOTION.

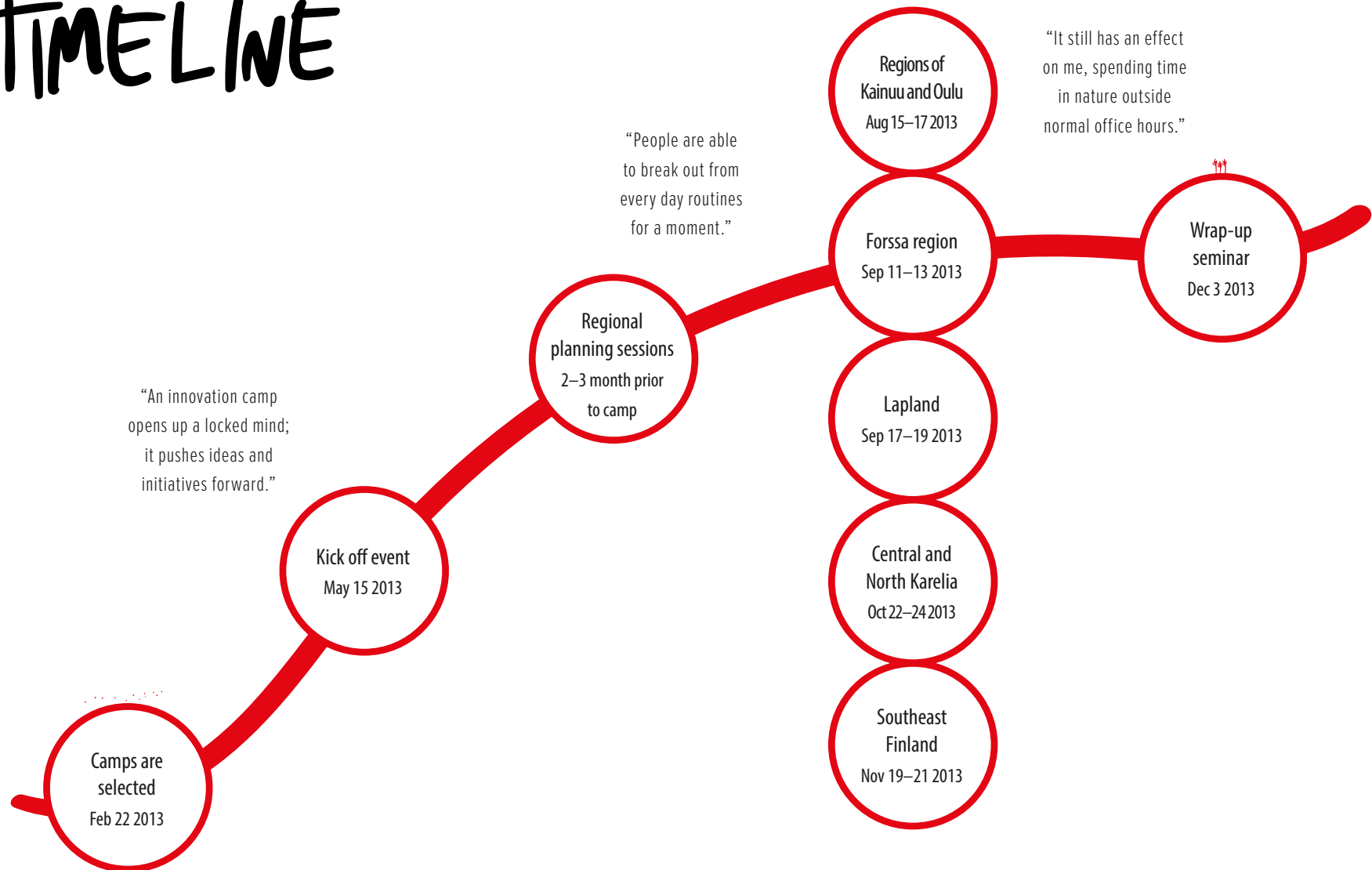
Innovation camps leave a mark. Participation in the camp offers an opportunity to think freely for three days, far away from the normal working environment and routines. Three intensive days at the camp with new and older friends is both tough and rewarding. In a new environment, preferably in the middle of nature, working with colleagues feels different and liberating.

CAMP IN A CONTINUUM.

An innovation camp can be seen as a part of a longer development continuum. Being extremely critical, one camp cannot change history or the future. Nevertheless, innovation camps might be revolutionary in terms of creating and improving cooperation and lighting a fire under novel attitudes towards rural development. The Rural Network Unit and all the other rural developers have a chance to implement ideas and make things happen after the camp. It would be sheer lunacy not to make use of the spark born at an innovation camp, the people that have found each other, the drive for development and the willingness to act.



TIMELINE



ROLES IN ORGANISING THE CAMP

LEVEL	NATIONAL	REGIONAL / LOCAL	CONSULTANT
NAME	Rural Network Unit	Local developers (local action groups, universities, development agencies, regional advisors, financers)	MDI
ROLE	Choosing areas where camps are carried out, choosing consultants, basic funding (budget around 30 000 € / camp), assessing and evaluating the work of the teams at the camps	Expressing local needs, defining themes, recruiting participants, guests and media, organizing practicalities of the camp	Facilitating, organizing the camp (leading teams, methods)

LESSONS & INSIGHTS

In many cases the innovation camp is the first or at least the biggest event ever organised in the region by a network of actors. To be successful, the camp requires close cooperation, selecting the right people, defining themes – and a great deal of camp spirit. This section presents some of the most notable lessons to be learned for future camps.

TEAM EFFORT. Organising an innovation camp provides a platform for regional cooperation – joint efforts are focused on practical issues related to the camp, defining and outlining themes to be addressed during the camp, inviting participants and experts and planning the communication tools and channels for the camp. The organising phase gathers together different actors in the region. In 2013, some of the regions left a joint application with another region for the camp. These regions had a history of internal cooperation, and they wanted to extend the cooperation to a neighbouring region. Some of the organisers were experienced camp hosts and hostesses, while some were organising a large event for the first time. Organising a camp proved to be inspiring and versatile, but also daunting if the responsibility remained on the shoulders of only a few people.

OUTLINING THEMES. It is possible to address five themes in small groups during the camp. It makes teamwork a lot easier, if the themes are specifically defined. Therefore it is

essential to draw clear frames for the themes – what are the expected results of the theme, what are the likely solutions, and most importantly – what are the issues not to be discussed in the theme. If the theme is presented as a challenge and defined clearly enough, it is more likely to provide a fruitful platform for innovations to take place during the three days at the camp.

BUILDING TEAMS. The main emphasis in recruiting participants to the camp should be on the heterogeneity of the team members. Equally important is that every participant is devoted to the camp for the three days. Organisers should take enough time to recruit participants. In order to develop the themes further the camp needs substance knowledge players, but also out of the box thinkers and fearless inventors. An optimal group composition includes young and more experienced, men and women, researchers and developers, enthusiasts and constructive critics, doers and thinkers. In the future, it might be worthwhile for the groups to have a meeting before the

camp, either in real life or online, to break the ice and have a preliminary discussion on the theme. This would ease efficient working during the camp, when the groups have had a chance to unload the first set of expectations, suspicions, and ideas.

CIRCUMSTANCES. Creativity needs both time and freedom to burst out. Therefore a successful camp requires enough time and also camp-like circumstances. The camp facilities enable participants to break loose from roles and traditional attitudes and perspectives on issues. A free and creative state of mind may be supported with inspiring accommodation and meals. The facilities do not need to be luxurious, but clean and tidy surrounding with the possibility to relax and retire, help throughout the camp. In addition, it is important that the groups have equal premises and facilities. Stimulating research visits and a relaxing evening social programme support team building and throwing ideas around, and also give participants a chance to have a short break from intensive working.





KAINUU REGION AND OULU REGION

The joint innovation camp for the Kainuu and Oulu regions was organised in Kajaani from 15–17 August, 2013. The camp attracted around 50 enthusiastic regional developers from around Northern Finland. The participants were students, regional developers, entrepreneurs and civil servants. The innovation camp pursued novel perspectives on rural development. Themes varied from developing entrepreneurship's advisory services (especially among youngsters) to social entrepreneurship and accessibility of services in rural areas in the future. For example the teams developed a mobile application for a social cooperative to turn volunteer work into points and points into services. Another example is the idea of the Young Entrepreneurs Network Initiative, which kicked off at the camp. This initiative has applied for funding from the European Social Fund.

The joint innovation camp between the Kainuu and Oulu regions was characterised by well-functioning cooperation between the two regions. The ambitious target for the camp was to tackle the issue of developing rural development, which resulted in novel ideas on rural development. The camp participants have taken a lot of the ideas with them into their everyday work. After the camp it has been easy to contact and brainstorm ideas with new acquaintances even though the ideas developed during the camp have not proceeded as such. In addition, the camp lifted positive thinking and regional spirit. Some of the organisers are planning a new camp.

FORSSA REGION

The innovation camp for the Forssa region was organised in Mustiala, a traditional agricultural and rural industries' site, in Tammela municipality from 11–13 September, 2013. The innovation camp focused on the development of four sprouts of innovations, which were selected on the basis of a regional idea contest. The innovation camp had a strong business orientation with a goal of refining new operation models and business in the Forssa region. There were around 40 participants at the camp, varying from students, to developers, to entrepreneurs. The teams worked in four resource efficient themes of food, agriculture, textiles and health care services. One of the resource efficient ideas born at the camp was called Ruokarinkula (Food Circle) producing handy portion sized packages of left-over meals from schools.

The Forssa innovation camp has resulted in new operation models. The Poistari, idea related to unused textiles, has been developed under a project, which has increased awareness of the possibilities for finding a second use for spare textiles. Other ideas have been adopted for the activities of local leader groups. Despite not resulting in any concrete business, ideas developed during the camp took giant leaps compared to the usual way and pace of development.



INVEST IN THESE!

This section presents practical hints and tips to make the camp successful. Skim through the details and bag the ones you like!

COMMUNICATION.

Division of responsibilities for communication and dissemination of results to the widest possible public, improves both the orderliness of communication and the impacts of the camp. Frequently sent shorter messages give out an impression of a bubbling camp with a peculiar buzz. The marketing and promotion of an innovation camp should begin early enough to make both participants and the public aware of the upcoming event. Pre-camp communication attracts and also commits people to take part in and follow the camp. Also, bear in mind communication during and after the camp. Put effort into attracting the media to the guest event that takes place on the third day of the camp. Usually the invited guests are local mayors, officials of local municipalities, funding agents and the local media.

INVITE CO-DEVELOPERS TO THE CAMP.

You can take part in the camp in various roles. It is recommended to invite outside experts to the camp to spar in the ideastorm and challenge the participants. The main idea of outside experts is to help groups to proceed further with their idea using their own experiences and expertise. During the camp's second day, outside experts are welcomed to give a short presentation on their topic to enlighten the participants. Instead of inviting a bunch of outside experts, it might be reasonable to take a moment to think through the camp as a whole and invite only one or two experts who truly have something to give to the participants.

JURY TO JUDGE.

In addition to outside experts, all the camps have a camp jury. Be clear and open when communicating the role and tasks of the jury to judge members and camp participants. The main task for the jury is to assess the groups' ways of working. The jury may also pick a winner if they are appointed to that task, or at least give special mentions to some of the groups. Especially if the camp is designed as a competition and the jury is to choose the winner, the evaluation criteria have to be clearly communicated to participants in advance.

DISSEMINATE RESULTS.

When all the camps have been carried out, it is highly recommended to disseminate results and have a wrap-up seminar for all the participants. This helps to ventilate the experiences and feelings, and also in disseminating the results of each camp. The wrap-up seminar for the 2013 camps in December received thanks for providing a forum for meeting up with other camp organisers and also to disseminate results.

MAKE IDEAS HAPPEN.

Well-functioning ideas all have a mother or father who is extremely eager to make them happen in real life. The top ideas have been new to the region, but are not from outer space. The most fruitful ideas take off from firm ground with a strong connection to practical problem solving and a true need from its environment. The main goal of the camp is to create realisable ideas, which secure the implementation of the idea after the camp. The cooperation and first steps required to make the idea happen should be agreed on during the camp. New cooperation parties and resources are sought immediately after the camp. In many cases, it is best to invite local entrepreneurs to implement the ideas in practise.

AFTER-PARTY.

Keep in touch after the camp! Take a moment to agree on the first steps and actions, post-camp meeting, etc. during the camp. A new meeting after the camp provides a check point to see how the idea is developing and have a discussion on what can be done to further boost the implementation. Continuity and further steps may also be agreed and secured via an online community platform. Also keep in touch with the outside experts, especially if the ideas have a strong connection to business life. It might also be worth inviting new people to take the ideas further.



LAPLAND

The Lapland innovation camp took place in Muonio from 17–19 September, 2013. Around 60 rural developers, entrepreneurs and students from all over Lapland took part in the camp. The camp searched for new and inspiring ideas for welfare services that were worth testing. The services sought should comprehensively improve welfare in villages. Another starting point was the strengthening of local development. One of the ideas born at the camp was Lapsi Lapissa (Child in Lapland) that brings expecting mothers and families to Lapland's health centres. Increased supply of wellness and health services serves the local community in sparsely populated areas of Lapland.

Especially in Lapland, where people live apart from each other in a wide and sparsely populated rural area, improving cooperation is essential. Ideas produced during the camp found a fertile ground from cooperation between people from different backgrounds, a positive attitude, and courage to take ideas forward. The most significant impacts were reached through introducing a broader and bolder way of thinking for development work in Lapland. In addition, the camp improved networking, and produced concrete ideas for service concepts.

IDEAS THAT KICKED OFF

This section briefly describes some of the ideas that kicked off as a result of regional innovation camps during 2013.

GRANNY'S PLACE. An idea born at the innovation camp in North and Central Karelia, Granny's place, is a network of activities, facilities and services around the core of communal housing for over 65 year old people. Granny's place connects generations with each other, and revitalises communities both virtually and physically. Communal housing is linked with a service network with plenty of culture, exercise, welfare, nature and local food. The municipality of Rääkkylä and LAG Central Karelia Jetina are implementing a feasibility study related to the Granny's place initiative. University students are processing a to-

tal of four theses. The initiative focuses on four components: housing, services, cloud services, and course of life thinking. The idea rides on the crest of the wave of supported housing and community housing trends and is most definitely applicable in all of Finland and the rest of the western world.

NYVI – YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS NETWORK INITIATIVE. NYVI – Young Entrepreneurs Network Initiative was born in the innovation camp for the Kainuu and Oulu regions. The initiative presents in a positive light a young entrepreneurs network in rural areas, and offers possibilities for further networking and support services, for example in book keeping and designing web pages. The idea has been further developed online in Facebook, where think tanks have been set up. The preparation phase includes scanning for actors and the necessity of the network as well as its extent and focus areas. Setting up the network requires cooperation between entrepreneurs and educational institutions. The idea has spread from the regions of Kainuu and Oulu to Central Finland.

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POISTARI – OUT-OF-USE TEXTILES. The idea of reusing out-of-use textiles was originally found as a result of the Fenix idea contest in 2009 and further developed in the innovation camp in the Forssa Region. The utilisation of out-of-use and waste textiles has been experimented with in a project carried out by the Universities of Applied Sciences in Häme and Lahti along with the cities of Forssa and Loimaa. At the moment, the TEXVEX-project has implemented an experiment on the utilisation of waste textiles in Humpvila, Forssa and Loimaa.

MARTTI MOBILE APPLICATION. MARTTI (Smart) mobile application, created at the innovation camp in Lapland for community and diversified services, has focused on services in sparsely populated areas. A prototype of the app has been actively developed and presented to Sitra (The Finnish Innovation Fund), the Regional Council of Lapland and the city of Rovaniemi. The idea is interlinked with public sector activities, which makes it relevant and opens up huge development potential. After the camp, MARTTI mobile app has attracted new partners, e.g. the municipality of Utsjoki. The idea being concrete, based on a need and attaching itself to different actors' home bases have lent it wings.

SALPACTION – EVENT AT THE SALPA-LINE FORTIFICATION. In Southeast Finland's innovation camp, SALPAction, an event around the Salpa-line fortification, took off from local strengths and a historically known tourist attraction. SALPAction gathers entrepreneurs, developers, residents, and activists in Southeast Finland to an event, culminating in a 100 km endurance race and shorter races in the trenches of the fortification. The idea has found its home from a project run by the city of Lappeenranta.



CENTRAL AND NORTH KARELIA

The joint innovation camp for Central and North Karelia took place in Liperi from 22–24 October, 2013. The camp consisted of around 50 participants. There was a great amount of entrepreneurs and students, rural developers and innovators from the university. The camp had two main themes: refining and selling organically produced food and the possibilities for optical fibre. One of the ideas took advantage of the possibility for optical fibre in gardening services. Viihtyisä Piha (Cosy Garden) brings gardening companies into the same portal where it becomes easy for the consumer to order garden planning services through the internet.

Three of the groups in the Central and North Karelia innovation camp have had meetings after the camp and developed ideas further. Most of the ideas have blended into on-going development projects. People committed to, for example Granny's place, have expanded to include students from universities. The Granny's place initiative is in the feasibility study phase, where workshops have been arranged and several academic thesis studies have been launched.

GREETINGS FROM THE JURY

The regional innovation camps have asked for sparring partners in accordance with the camp themes. In most of the camps the sparring partners have also worked in the jury. In 2013 the jury consisted of a total of 23 people, from regional, local and national experts in finance, business, rural development and universities. In some camps members of the media also participated as jury members.

The main task of the jury is to spar with the camp teams through its feedback. Its task is to inspire, give constructive feedback and evaluate the idea. The jury helps the teams to develop the ideas into innovations, commercialized products or business concepts. The jury can make use of the evaluation form that focuses on the innovativeness, functionality, potential and ambitiousness of the idea. Also implementation or next steps are a considerable part of the evaluation. The jury can also evaluate how the group works and give special remarks.

The jury gives feedback to all teams and possible remarks at the camp grand finale. If it has been decided that there will be a winner, the jury picks one team and rewards it.

CASE

A CASE EXAMPLE THE JURY'S WORK AT THE FORSSA REGION CAMP

At the camp different actors and experts refined ideas into business concepts that were mirrored against national, European and international levels. The jury worked interactively in the refining processes of the idea, emphasizing the business point of view and especially the central position of intangible assets in the innovation projects. The cohesion was excellent in all the teams and the results withstood the inspection of the jury.

SOUTHEAST FINLAND

The Innovation camp of Southeast Finland was organised as a joint event between two regions, Kymenlaakso and South Karelia, in Lappeenranta from 19–21 November, 2013. There were around 50 enthusiastic entrepreneurs, civil servants, business savvies and rural developers at the camp. The camp discussed possibilities of the national border especially from the point of view of tourism. One of the ideas reached all the way to Asia: the idea called Good Life Booked offers reservation services for tourists from far away by collecting local, small tourism entrepreneurs together.

When weighing the benefits of the camp, the participants most often referred to cooperation and new contacts. Though the possibilities of the long national border are well known, the ideas of the camp are yet to be implemented. However, the innovation camp introduced people from different backgrounds to each other. Local entrepreneurs welcomed the opportunity to meet other entrepreneurs, as new contacts and networks were created.

THE CAMPS LEAVE A MARK



The innovation camps have both short and long term effects, of which the most visible are the new initiatives, projects and business. Another effect the camps have had is the improved cooperation between individuals, regional organisations, and local communities. According to the camp organisers, the camps have helped to strengthen the will and perception that it pays off to join forces and do things together instead of acting alone.

The innovation camp has many goals: sometimes the goal of producing novel ideas may be in contrast with the goal of improving cooperation and building networks. Nevertheless, improved cooperation is one of the long-lasting effects a camp might produce. Organising a camp regionally has deepened and improved cooperation. Rural development benefits from new actors and ideas have been developed together. People, who have worked with each other for a long time, freshen up and get inspired from the atmosphere. After the camp, it is easier to contact people who have lived through the same experience, which also makes meetings less formal. People also find totally new acquaintances during the camp.

In 2013, innovation camps gathered together hundreds of enthusiastic people, who were especially motivated to develop rural regions. Inviting these dynamos together lights a fire under new ideas and development intentions. It is essential, that acquaintances, partnerships and cooperation are further promoted after the camp. To make things happen and realise the potential in the ideas, strong commitment, communication and post-camp meetings are needed. The Rural Network Unit's role is to bring forward best practices and good examples from the innovation camps. In addition to continuity and regular meetings, rural development needs smaller, spot on development initiatives on various topics. For example, experiments could be funded and managed in a non-bureaucratic manner, if funding could be applied with an A4-long application and reported with another afterwards.





MDI *Management Design Intelligence*



The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas