EXPLORING CORPORATE FORESIGHT IN FINNISH LAPLAND
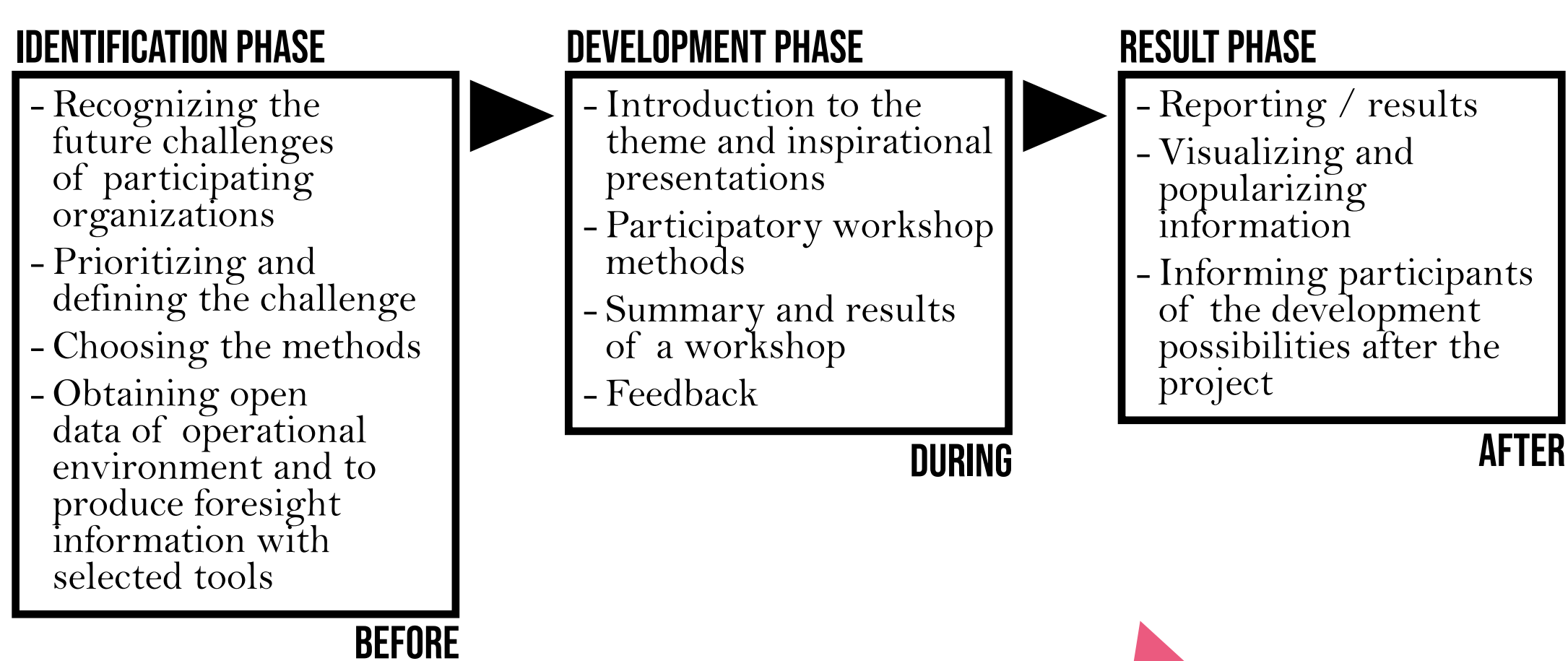
JENNI KEMI
MARI VÄHÄKUOPUS
ANU HARJU-MYLLYAHO
LAPLAND UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

1. AIMS

The aim of "Etumatka - Tiedolla tulosta" project was to identify and create new ways utilize foresight information and strengthen knowledge in relation to the operating environment in a new way. During the project three practical experimental workshops were conducted together with SME clusters exploring new ways and models to promote sustainable growth and competitiveness of the existing businesses in the region as well as supporting new businesses. The tools and methods used in the workshops vary according to a common challenge identified in cooperation by a SME cluster.

The workshops aimed at producing futures images and creating paths from the present to the best possible future. This was achieved by combining creativity, critical thinking, learning and collaboration and empowerment. The aim was to utilize both qualitative foresight methods and quantitative open data in a user-oriented manner. Open data was collected by using various existing open data resources, digital systems and tools and methods.

2. THE FORESIGHT EXPERIMENT PROCESS

IDENTIFICATION PHASE
- Recognizing the future challenges of participating organizations
- Prioritizing and defining the challenge
- Choosing the methods
- Obtaining open data of operational environment and to produce foresight information with selected tools

BEFORE

DEVELOPMENT PHASE
- Introduction to the theme and inspirational presentations
- Participatory workshop methods
- Summary and results of a workshop
- Feedback

DURING

RESULT PHASE
- Reporting / results
- Visualizing and popularizing information
- Informing participants of the development possibilities after the project

AFTER

WORKSHOPS

	DEVELOPING HOME CARE	RECRUITING AND ENGAGEMENT	DEVELOPING SUMMER TOURISM
FUTURE CHALLENGE	Self-oriented customer of the future & creating home care and service network which help to sustain of ability to function of future customer	Recruitment and engagement of skilled staff	Strengthen summer tourism
METHODS & DATA	Future vision, service design, trend data from social media (Futusome), frequency analysis, word clouds	Future map, trend data from social media (Futusome), correlation analysis, frequency analysis	Futures wheel and annual calendar, trend data from social media (Google Trends, MediaToolkit, Futusome), frequency analysis, correlation analysis
AS RESULTS	Customer profiles for the future	Action plan for the future	Infographic of frequency of selected keywords for the businesses. Action plan for the future
PARTICIPANTS	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, deputies of public organizations and third sector	Small and medium-sized enterprises	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, deputies of public organizations and third sector

3. RESULTS & FINDINGS

The experiments provided SME clusters with the opportunity to experiment interdisciplinary practices and forms of collaboration, as well as get familiar with foresight and open data tools and techniques. The experiments produced future information for the companies and organizations in the region in a user-oriented manner, and strengthened the expertise of universities, businesses and other RDI actors and to support regional foresight cooperation.

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- Opportunities and capabilities for use of open data in foresight were identified.
- The attitude of the SME clusters towards exploiting open data in business is open-minded and interested.
- Experiments provided companies with an low-threshold opportunity to test tools and methods free of charge, and thus find suitable foresight tools for their own business.
- Challenges and opportunities related to the operating environment and the processes of their own activities were recognized.
- New ways to utilize open data in foresight were found.
- New ways of business collaboration were found.
- The process facilitated co-creation and co-operation of the participants.

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- Experiments made it possible to experiment with qualitative foresight methods and open data providing foundations for further development.
- SME's in Lapland are interested in foresight and use of open data.
- Combining foresight methods and tools and open data provides new insights into the assessment of the operating environment, competitors and market analysis, and performance review.
- Open data can be used to explore phenomena (alternative futures / scenarios) and inspiration for identifying new products, services, and customers.
- the use of open data for business development requires a systematic and goal-oriented approach, as anticipated.
- Open data in itself does not provide a solution to the problem at hand, but it provides an opportunity to find new information about markets, trends and people's attitudes to phenomena.
- Data tools support the collection and processing of information and facilitate the utilization of information as part of foresight.
- Data is often in variable format, so its design-to-analytical design requires time and expertise for both qualitative and quantitative analysis. This also challenges the automation of analysis.

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- Development challenges related to the foresight skills and utilization of open data were identified.
- The systematic foresight, in particular the combination of open data and qualitative foresight methods, is limited.
- Adopting foresight as part of business development requires strong expertise: the ability to interpret knowledge, draw conclusions, and knowledge management should be strengthened.

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- Open data offers the potential to create added value for anticipation, but only if the choice of suitable tools and the interpretation of the information they produce is successful.
- False interpretations can be made based on open data – if the correct variables are not recognized or the data content in use suffers in design.
- Experiments showed the use of predictive methods and the use of open data tools in decision-making and in drawing conclusions that affect the development of operations, requiring further action. In order for companies in Lapland to have the capacity to make proactive business development and use open data, the foresight and data analytics expertise needs to be strengthened in the future.
- This requires further development of predictive methods based on open data and the sharing and adoption of good practices.

FACTS & FIGURES

- **3** locations in Finnish Lapland (Rovaniemi, Ranua, Tornio)
- **8** workshops
- **13** SMEs and public organizations
- **3** foresight process models and evaluation of the possibilities of these models to foresee the changes in business environment and act as aid in decision-making

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Jenni Kemi
Project Manager
Etumatka - Tiedolla tulosta -project
jenni.kemi@lapinamk.fi
+358 40 4829 434

www.kokeilunpaikka.fi/fi/experiment/810/

LAPIN LIITTO

LAPIN AMK
Lapland University of Applied Sciences