

Smart Countryside

18 May 2017 | Janne Antikainen, MDI Public Ltd

Smart Countryside – better services in rural areas by using digitalisation and experiments - summary

- Study on Smart Countryside – better services in rural areas by using digitalisation and experiments focuses on the current state, opportunities, international practices and service user views on digital services in rural areas.
- The study was conducted in April – December 2016 based on written documentation, statistical and register data and expert interviews. New data was gathered via surveys for companies, inhabitants and local political and civil servants. The study results and further opinions were discussed in digicafés in Kauhajoki, Kuhmo and Rääkkylä and in future workshops in Turku, Joensuu and Kitee. The international documentation review addressed the Canadian and Scottish digital strategies.
- Team: MDI Public Ltd, Finnish Environment Institute, University of Vaasa and Spatia from University of Eastern Finland
- Part of Government's analysis, assessment and research activities, budget 235 000 euros

Summary

- Digitalisation brings the services near, reduces costs and streamlines processes. Digitalisation can have a great impact in the countryside where the pace of service structural change is quicker and distances to physical service points grow.
- Finnish data engineering and infrastructure are of high quality and the common attitude towards digitalisation is rather eager. Still, the servification and the customer orientation are of quite low level.
- Unfortunately there is a gap between will and skills among the Finnish people and enterprises – not everybody has equal level of readiness to seize the opportunities of digitalisation.
- The possibilities and advantages of digitalisation must be brought out clearer, citizens' skills must be improved and forerunner companies and regions must gain visibility.
- Functioning data connections and digital guidance reduce the risk of digital exclusion.
- Digital experiments and their experiences are encouraged in the fields of transport, social and health services and remote working and studying.
- Rural development has been known for the strong emphasis on local knowledge.
- Digitalisation may bring the local actors even closer to each other.
- Public sector plays a crucial role in creating platforms and providing data while the local associations and organisations channel the voluntary work and guidance.

Key findings



The importance of digitalisation for rural areas

Nearer
Services

Reduced
Costs

Streamlined
Processes

Digitalisation can play a major role in rural areas where private and public services are rapidly changing and distances to physical service points grow.

Residents' readiness and willingness in good shape

- Rural residents are ready and willing to use electronic services. Weak digitalization or resistance to change is not a prevalent reality.
- The opportunities and benefits of digitalization have to be brought more and more clearly out of the question, the digital citizenship skills need to get better, and the pioneering companies and regions to be more visible.
- Functioning data connections and digital guidance reduce the risk of digital exclusion.

Municipalities taking first steps, but with very high expectations

- The utilization of digitalization and the provision of digital services are in the pilot phase.
 - The most opportunities for digitalization have been utilized in education and in social and health services.
- Municipalities expect much from digitization: services are improving, cost-efficiency is increasing and rural vitality is growing.

Companies on the path of digitalisation

- The pace is very different in companies.
 - Some are unaware of the opportunities, while at the other extreme companies are exploiting big data, industrial internet applications and cloud services.
- Pioneering the use of digitization explains the enthusiasm and activity of the players
- From the point of view of companies, the uncertainty about the concrete benefits and the impact of digital actions on their own business is a clear attitude – and slow-down factor – in the spread of digitalisation in companies.

Digitalization and experimental culture in rural areas need support



Local involvement motivates

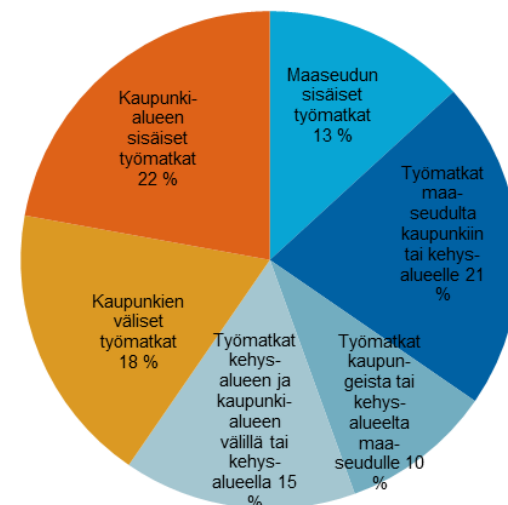
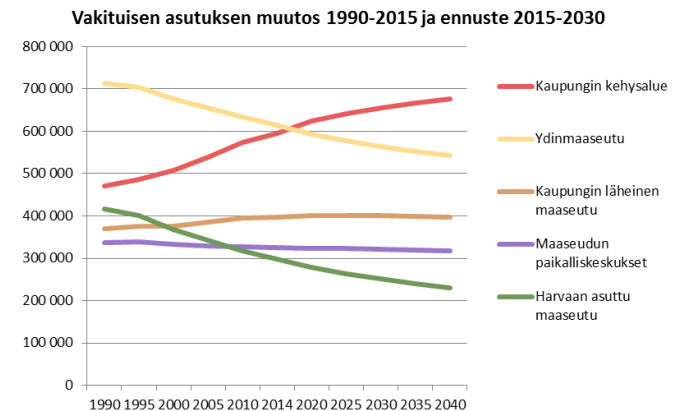
- Digi-cafes as applied *world-cafe*-method
 - Kauhajoki (Southern Ostrobothnia), Rääkkylä (Northern Carelia) ja Kuhmon Iivantiira (Kainuu)
 - Marketing in social media, local magazines, Leader, village associations and activists
 - 4 facilitators, 41 participants
- The point of view of local knowledge and participation
 - The willingness and capacity for development can be found -> chance for place-based development
 - True pride for DIY and past accomplishments
 - However: paralysis caused by the governmental reformations, fuzzy policy puzzles
- Fiber Optic Network as backbone for ICT
 - The reliability of wireless connections is emphasized in business operations
 - 4g and 5g: short range, poor permeability
 - Accessibility, compatibility and overall attractiveness is improving
 - The strengthening of e-capital needed

Pocket availability as a success factor

- selective and cumulative inequalities must be addressed
 - Distance, ability to pay, age, exclusion, ICT skills, social capital
 - Lead to the disruption of some regions, villages and housing areas
 - NB! Digitalisation of social and health care services -> Moving units, remote consultation
- Accessibility and authentication
 - Understandable concepts and symbols: not administrative but need-based approach
 - Effortless identification would greatly increase the use of various services
 - The digital pocket availability of information is everyday life also in countryside
 - Use of existing technology: rings, chats, skype
- Socially accelerated technical imagination
 - Technical-social-economic ...
 - Different types of imagination have to face each other: The Coders goes rural -event
 - Added reality and virtual reality

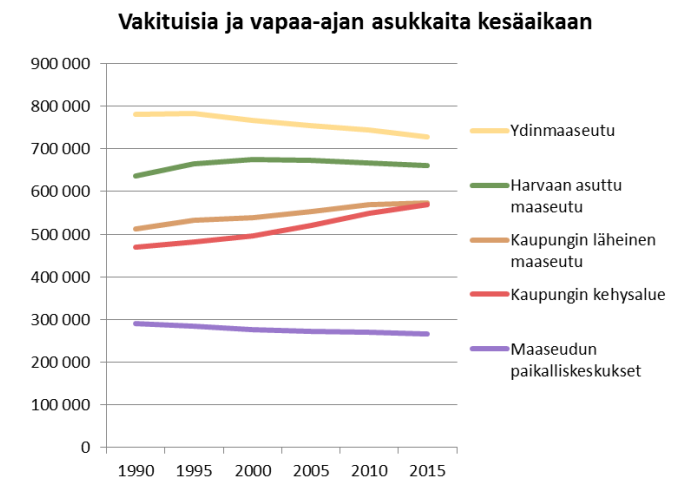
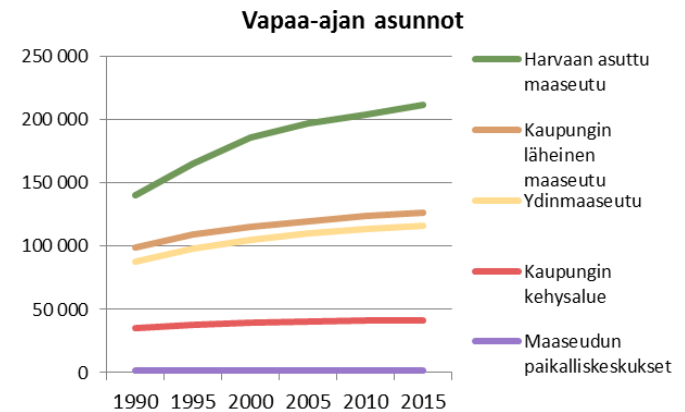
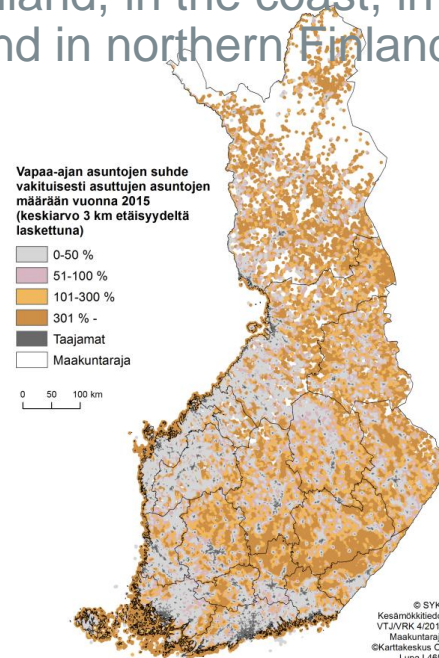
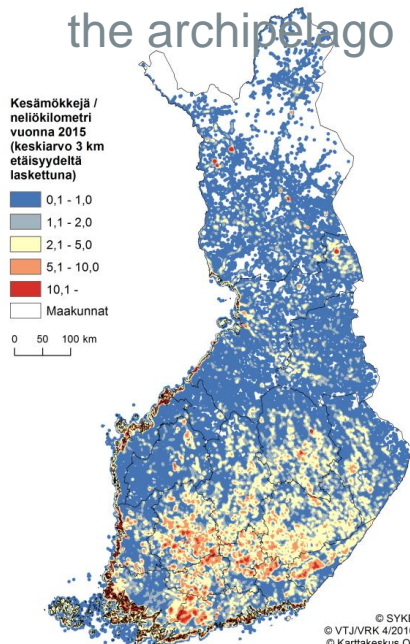
Change in the operating environment: the differences in rural areas are increasing and mobility increases

- The differentiated development of the nearby rural and other rural areas will continue to develop
- The number of older people is growing slower than in cities, but the share of the population is rising to a very high level
- The ageing population development emphasizes the role of agglomerations as a place of residence for the rural population.
- Constellation of service provision in agglomerations increases mobility needs
- Travel-to-work between rural areas and cities has become more common in both directions.



The widespread use of leisure accommodation will smooth out rural demographic change and increase the vitality of the regions

- Recreational housing doubles the number of sparsely populated rural people in the summer
- The significance is especially high in southern Lake-Finland, in the coast, in the archipelago and in northern Finland

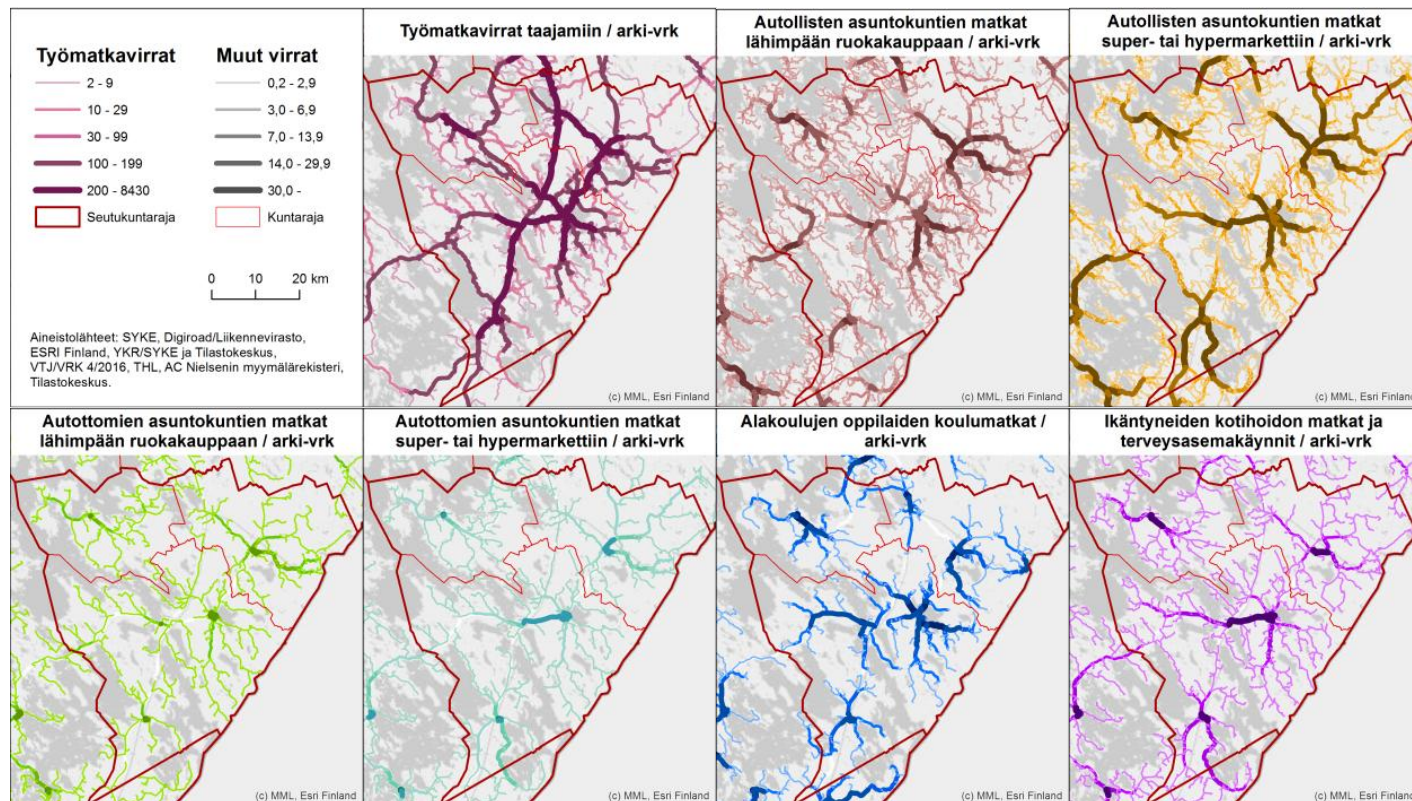


Essential service needs based on resident survey and proposals for solutions

- Work and studying -> ICT infrastructure, experimental cases, campaigns
- Retail and postal services -> services on wheels, grouped services
- Social and health care services -> distance diagnosis, service busses, neighbourhood help
- Spare time services -> digital library services, ridesharing, service points
- Housing services -> smart solutions, information on services
- ICT and communication -> information sharing, portals, peer groups
- Mobility and transport -> smart timetables

Modeling rural flows

- With GIS it is possible to model the flows - assuming that the travels are directed to the fastest reachable object
- The mapping raises the possibility of connecting transport in different parts of the transport network.



Possibilities for combining services and transport

- Employment, shopping, service and school trips are in many respects similar.
- Households with cars have good chances to utilize and offer shared rides with others.
- Combining different types of transport works better with what more types of trips can be viewed in the same context.
- It is possible to combine freight transport both for passenger transport and for current distribution, for example by adding new products to mail delivery.
- Map Reviews help service providers to identify the scale of demand for services in different areas.
- Villages are key territorial units for services and mobility.
- In many areas, the most functional are small-scale flexible mobility solutions based on passenger car sharing and the use of small buses.
- Key aspects of service consolidation include the current service base, location at traffic nodes, adequate localization, appropriate premises and network utilization in different ways.

Recommendations for developing services and launching experiments



Recommendations for Increasing Digital Learning

- Opportunities and benefits are highlighted
- Citizenship digital skills get better, pioneering companies and areas are more pronounced
- Preventing digital exclusion by fiber optic
- Preventing exclusion with counseling and guidance

Recommendations for developing services and experimenting culture

- Pilot projects for transport, social health care and distance working
- The development of systematics for the development of digital services in social and health care
- Digital identity card as a solid foundation for new services

Recommendations for governance

- Digitalisation is embedded in all functions
- Supporting experiments by using public sector resources more efficiently
- Open data: public information to support digital solutions

Recommendations for utilizing local knowledge

- Conduct customer relationships using local knowledge
- Local knowledge base utilized for developing services
- Local service production should be fully exploited

Recommendations for transport integration

- Differentiated rural areas – differentiated solutions
- Obstacles to the development of services must be abolished in society and in different organizations
- Combine transport to the same system
- Shared rides combine small number of service users, and providers
- Sustainable and local solutions for rural transport services

Kiitos!

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S Y K E


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