

Chapter

Improving Youths' Entrepreneurial Abilities to Strengthen the Future of Finland

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Abstract

Sparsely populated areas (SPA) are often suffering from narrow economic structure, which makes them vulnerable for challenges in the global environment since their capacity to adapt to rapid economic changes is poor (Lundmark 2006). Entrepreneurs are key actors in job creation, economic wellbeing, and resilience in the regions (Muller 2016). In spite of its impact on economic growth, the number of entrepreneurs is commonly low in high-income countries (Rauch and Hulsink 2015). Therefore, entrepreneurial education (EE) has been an increasing interest for the researcher as an enabler of new jobs and new enterprises advancing welfare and competitiveness (Leitch et al. 2012; Rauch and Hulsink 2015). People, and especially youth living in SPAs, small towns and regions next to growth centers, are likely to move to larger growth centers and other densely populated regions. To make SPAs more viable and enable more youth to live in the countryside, this study focuses on an important issue: youths' entrepreneurial abilities to increase welfare and enable young people to freely choose the regions where they want to live. Young people in urban and SPA regions ~~especially~~ benefit from practical education, but ~~while~~ young people in ~~towns~~ SPAs seem to be more prepared ~~open and able~~ when it comes to entrepreneurial thinking. This study highlights the potential of rural

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regions as a future living and working possibility for young people. The study also shows how improving youths' entrepreneurial skills would increase entrepreneurship, common welfare, and national happiness.

Keywords: youth, entrepreneurial abilities, sparsely populated areas, entrepreneurial education, regional welfare

Introduction

Finland has been ranked as the world's happiest country for five consecutive years since 2018, a ranking for which high-quality education is one of the most important factors, as well as healthcare, democratic governance, and human rights (This is Finland 2022). On the other hand, Finland's population of 5.5 million inhabitants living in an area of 338,440 km² (STAT 2022) means there are sparsely populated areas (SPAs) in addition to the population concentrated in the capital region and large university cities (e.g., Kotavaara et al. 2012). The sparsely populated areas primarily exist in eastern and northern parts of Finland, where uninhabited regions would be politically challenging due to the more than 1,340-kilometer-long border with Russia (NLS 2022).

People, and especially youth living in SPAs, small towns and regions next to growth centers, are likely to move to larger growth centers and other densely populated regions (Grunfelder et al. 2020; Muilu and Rusanen 2003). This is largely because of a lack of jobs and decreased municipal services in SPAs. Globally, entrepreneurial education (EE) has been highlighted as an enabler for creating new jobs and new enterprises that can promote welfare and competitiveness (Leitch et al. 2012). Thus, to make SPAs more viable and to enable more youth to live in the countryside, this study focuses on an important issue: youths' entrepreneurial abilities to increase welfare and enable them to freely choose the regions where they want to live. The issue is inspected through the EE lenses in order to answer the research question, "Are there differences in the youth's entrepreneurial abilities between SPAs and town areas and, if so, what does it mean from the point of regional welfare?" The principal goals of the European Union include reducing economic disparities and supporting employment- and wealth-generating activities and what is being put into practice in rural and remote areas by means of regional policy to support sustainability and self-sufficiency (Müller 2016). In light of recent global developments and events, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine,

it is important to keep Finland's eastern regions populated, not only for economic reasons, but for political and safety issues as well.

Sparsely populated areas often suffer from a narrow economic structure, making them vulnerable because of their limited capacity to adapt to rapid economic changes (Lundmark 2006). Although the populations living in Finland's SPAs are decreasing, some people still prefer living in the countryside rather than in cities. Yet, the level of entrepreneurship is low compared to neighboring countries. To increase the country's entrepreneurial activity, it is crucial to encourage such interest. For this reason, Finnish schools, which are a part of the best education system in the world (Loveless 2022), have an important task ahead.

This research focuses on an evaluation of youths' entrepreneurial abilities, in rural regions compared to urban regions, and identifies any differences between them. Data is collected by an inquiry involving 45 school-aged children at two lower secondary schools. One of the two secondary schools is located in a SPA and the other is located in a town environment, in the Kymenlaakso region on the border with Russia (Figure 1) in a southern part of Finland. Being a rural region, Kymenlaakso faces the same challenges as most SPAs. At the same time, with approximately 170,000 inhabitants, it has one of the most significant forest industries in Europe (Kymenlaakson Liitto 2022). The youths' entrepreneurial abilities are studied by comparing the opinions of young people in two different residential regions: in the densest, urban region and in a sparsely populated rural region. The current Covid-19 pandemic has increased people's interest in being able to freely choose where they live, and through entrepreneurship, young people can live anywhere and in any way they want, thus strengthening a rural area's economic welfare.

The results show that youth at the lower secondary school in the studied SPA were more innovative, managed their affairs better, were more risk-oriented, had more courage to question the current socioeconomic norms and customs, and were more socially capable of networking. The youth in urban areas, in turn, seem to be more limited within all researched abilities, such as innovativeness, risk orientation, and social connections. The findings indicate that, despite the presence of less entrepreneurial attractions in SPAs, young people in SPAs have better entrepreneurial abilities than similarly aged youth in the urban environment.

The value of this study is the descriptive comparison of entrepreneurial skills and abilities between SPAs and urban areas. Both sparsely and densely populated areas benefit from EE. In the case of SPAs, the entrepreneurial skills of young people are even more important for keeping their municipalities

populated and economically active. Young people in SPAs especially benefit from EE, while young people in towns seem to need to be more aware of entrepreneurship as an alternative to employment and to choose more freely their living region.

This study highlights the potential of rural regions as a future living and working possibility for young people. It also shows how improving youths' entrepreneurial skills would increase entrepreneurship, common welfare, and national happiness.

Theoretical Framework

People, especially youth living in SPAs, such as small towns and regions next to growth centers, are likely to move to large growth centers and other densely populated regions because of a lack of jobs and decreased municipal services in their own towns. On the other hand, increased interest in clean nature and environment attracts more than just tourists. Recent studies (e.g., McElwee and Atherton 2021) have already demonstrated that a favorable environment and quality of life both support entrepreneurship and can even attract highly qualified personnel (i.e., Müller and Korsgaard 2018) if the appropriate structures exist, such as proper digital and physical connections, decent infrastructure, and public services. Becoming an entrepreneur is a rather common solution to earn one's living in the place one wishes to live for personal reasons (Ala-Rämi 2007).

Entrepreneurial Abilities

Entrepreneurial education has been globally highlighted as a creator of new jobs and new enterprises advancing welfare and competitiveness. Additionally, EE "is essential to an individual's survival in today's world, helping an individual to cope with changing economic demands and labor markets" (Erkkilä 2000). According to the Entrepreneurial 2020 Action Plan created in Europe, growth and new jobs are sought to answer the challenges of economic crisis and unleash Europe's entrepreneurial potential, thereby removing any existing obstacles and revolutionizing the culture of entrepreneurship in the EU (EC 2020). The EU and its countries are involved in promoting entrepreneurship education to propose that people, especially young people and enterprising people, become entrepreneurs or

entrepreneurial thinkers contributing to economic development and establishing sustainable communities. The European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (Bacigalupo et al. 2016) is a manner in which to reach this target, including several developing competences and learning outcomes for learning to be an entrepreneur.

Becoming an entrepreneur involves recognizing opportunities, developing and growing a business, venture creation, and self-employment (Fayolle 2013). EE is based on the idea that to become an entrepreneur requires an individual's ability to turn ideas into action (EU, The Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education 2008). Entrepreneurship also requires taking initiative and exhibiting creativity, personal development and self-reliance (Lackeus 2015). The idea of exploitation requires abilities, such as creativity, innovation, risk-taking, and the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives (Commission of the European Communities 2006, 4).

Entrepreneurship education requires learned knowledge about how to be an entrepreneur as well as skills to engage in entrepreneurial behavior. According to Seikkula-Leino (2007), entrepreneurship education is content that deals with working methods, community, problem-solving, learning from mistakes, creativity, reflection, and entrepreneurship. It also requires learning the knowledge, skills, and motivation connected with entrepreneurial behavior (Jones and Matlay 2011; Klapper and Farber 2016). Entrepreneurial education increases student's entrepreneurial skills by focusing on the development of skills that enable the realization of opportunity (e.g., Fayolle and Gailly 2013; Fiore et al. 2019). Additionally, "[t]he outcomes of such education are supporting the life skills necessary to live productive lives even if one does not start a business" (Neck and Corbett 2018).

There are three goals to EE: an individual 1) must learn to understand entrepreneurship, 2) learn to be entrepreneurial and 3) learn to be an entrepreneur (Kirby 2004; Hytti and O'Gorman 2004). According to Mwasalwiba (2010), most commonly, the goals of entrepreneurship education are defined as creating and increasing entrepreneurial attitudes, entrepreneurial culture, and spirit. Also important are new ventures and the creation of jobs, as well as promoting society and the stimulation of entrepreneurial skills (Mwasalwiba 2010).

In this study, we are interested in youth's entrepreneurial abilities, gained by EE, in SPAs as a means to preserve all regions that are populated and vigorous. Through entrepreneurship education, young people acquire abilities to create business: the ability to recognize opportunities in one's life, to pursue opportunities by generating new ideas and finding the needed recourses, to

create and operate a new firm, and to think in a creative and critical manner. So, besides knowledge and skills in business, entrepreneurship education mainly addresses the development of certain beliefs, values, and attitudes with the aim to help students really consider entrepreneurship as an attractive and valid alternative to paid employment or unemployment (Holmgren et al. 2005).

Entrepreneurial Education as a Means of Broadening Young People's Options for the Future

Sparsely populated areas are often suffering from narrow economic structures and from the population migrating to larger cities due to lack of jobs and decreased municipal services. Yet, there has been increased interest to live in clean air and environments if an appropriate structure exists, which means proper digital and physical connections, decent infrastructure, and public services. On the other hand, entrepreneurship education seeks to propose that people, especially young people, be responsible for contributing to economic development and sustainable communities (EC 2008).

To provide opportunities and good living conditions, the regional policies have to find instruments that enable people to live and thrive economically, even in sparsely populated rural areas, and entrepreneurship is one main way to sustain vitality in these regions (Müller 2016). Furthermore, Muilu and Rusanen (2003) found in their study that ~~the trend of the~~ despite of young population in rural regions was radically decreasing, with only one-fifth of them was determined to move away. For ~~four~~ four out of five, living in a place that enables a good life, is essential, ~~question the possibilities of creating a good life~~ and whether it would be possible in the rural region. This became a crucial question. As Muilu and Rusanen (2003, 305) state, “Young people need education and jobs in order to build a future for their home district, and forms of rural youth policy and local decision-making that support individualized education and career paths need more attention in this respect.”

Entrepreneurship is commonly regarded as a result of a combination of individual and environmental factors. The regional environment has a multidimensional impact on an individual's intention for starting a business, including their beliefs and perceptions of their ability to complete the task (Kibler 2013). Thus, by providing information and supporting entrepreneurial skills among young people, the regions can create possibilities for self-employment as entrepreneurs in their home location. The EE does not self-

evidently lead into actual entrepreneurial actions, but a positive perception of entrepreneurship is vital in creating that possibility (Rauch and Hulsink 2015).

Method

Methodological Approach and Research Process

We have chosen a qualitative research approach for this study in order to ensure richer data and findings (Silverman 2020) and to produce rich descriptions of everyday life (Stake 2010). Additionally, the comparative, descriptive case study established by employing a qualitative research approach will provide richness to the collected data and, thus, the findings. A selected case study methodology enables us to utilize an extensive examination of a single instance of the phenomenon of interest (Collis and Hussey 2009).

We used two different samples in two lower secondary schools in the Kymenlaakso region in Southern Finland. The data is based on the questionnaire being part of a larger regional EE study that focuses on all school levels: primary schools (7/8–12/13 years old), lower secondary schools (13/14–15/16 years old), upper secondary schools (16/17–18/19 years old), vocational schools, two units of regional polytechnics, and micro enterprises that operated for less than 5 years. The study questions are based on broad EE literature, as well as international and national EE goals and criteria.

Altogether, 786 individuals answered the questionnaire in 2018–2019, focusing on studying an impressiveness of EE and training. The impressiveness addresses the extent to which EE teaching has advanced young people's entrepreneurial abilities, and thus made it possible for them to freely choose their living place by earning their living as entrepreneurs.



Figure 1. Location of research region Kymenlaakso and locations of the schools. (Maps: Thomas Brinkhoff: City Population, <http://www.citypopulation.de>).

Data Description

Kymenlaakso is a region located in the southeastern part of Finland, with approximately 170,000 inhabitants. This region is one of the most significant forest industry clusters in Europe. It (Figure 1, the left side map) has selected the potential expertise/growth sectors as the starting point for Kymenlaakso's future smart specialization-based key strategy points relating to forest industry and the region itself. The fields that came to the fore were digitalization, logistics, bioeconomics, and tourism, as well as health and well-being (Kymenlaakson Liitto 2022). By 2025, Kymenlaakso will be profiled in accordance with the selected growth fields – logistics, bioeconomics, and digitalization, as well as the Regional Innovation and Smart Specialization Strategies (European Commission 2022) key strategy points. It will be nationally and internationally competitive. Figure 1 presents the location of the research region. Despite being relatively close to Finland's capital region, it is also worth noting that it is bordered with Russian, which presents additional challenges. The studied schools are less than one hour away from the border, which is also the EU's external border. As mentioned before, the average population density in the province Kymenlaakso is 35.7 inhabitants per square kilometer and the only Kotka (the town school) is over that average with 187.1 inhabitants per square kilometer. On the contrary, the other school studied is located in Kouvola, which is only slightly below the average density

(31.3) but is outside the town center as explained in more detail below. Furthermore, in the border municipality Miehikkälä, the average population density is only 4.3 per square kilometer (STAT 2022).

This study's data was collected by means of a questionnaire survey that 45 schoolgirls and schoolboys in 9th class at two lower secondary schools filled out in the spring term of 2019. The samples are two separate classes in lower secondary schools: the Hirvelä school (Figure 1, right side of the map, ~~black~~ upper spot) in town Kouvola, and the school of Kotkansaaren keskuskoulu in the center of Kotka (Figure 1, right side of the map, ~~orange~~ lower spot). The Hirvelä (Voikkaa) area, as area SPA, is countryside with a partial post-industrial area that had 2,513 inhabitants about 14 kilometers from the center of Kouvola in 2018 (STAT 2022). The school of Kotkansaaren keskuskoulu, in turn, is located in the center of Kotka. The center of Kotka is typical, with a city hall, municipal and governmental agencies, shops, and block houses, offering living space for about 10,400 inhabitants in 2018 (STAT 2022). From the Hirvelä school ~~Eighteen~~ participated 18 youngsters ~~answered 18 youngsters~~ and 27 participated from Kotkansaaren Keskuskoulu.

The questionnaire asked about students' basic information (individual information, living region, school) and various entrepreneurial-related questions and tasks. The questions were based on national EE goals (OPM, 2022) and EE literature (e.g., Gibb 2005; Kyrö and Ripatti 2006).

The teachers administered the questionnaires, informing the students about the purpose of the research, providing them with a link to an electronic Webropol survey, and giving them time to respond to the questionnaire during their lessons. As a means of data collection, the Webropol survey was a digital tool reached both classes in their separate locations. One of the schools (Hirvelä school) was located in a SPA in the northern part of Kymenlaakso, and the other school (Kotkansaaren Keskuskoulu) was located in a town in the southern part of Kymenlaakso.

As we ~~moved~~ studied ~~to study~~ entrepreneurial abilities, the questions focused on themes such as target orientation, creativity, uncertainty tolerance, risk taking/courage to do things differently, innovativeness, operating under pressure, problem-solving, and sociability/networking. The variations of reply choices ranged from 1 to 5, with 5 being "Totally agreed" and 1 being "Totally disagreed." As Webropol reply settings was used the *forced action* function, all students needed to reply to all of the questions in order to guarantee a comprehensive view of their entrepreneurial abilities.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Data Results

The results, based on descriptive analysis, are presented as a visual mode of Radar Chart based on Webropol numeric replies in Figure 2. The original Finnish statement-style questions are translated into English. As follows, the themes of the statements are based on the questions’ text. For example, the first question, “I want to finish the work I started,” is thematized to mean target orientation. Another theme is creativity, stating, “I try new things.” The statement, “I am able to make important decisions, even if there are uncertainties involved” refers to the ability to tolerate uncertainty. The statement, “I dare to question the usual ways of doing things” is connected to the theme of risk taking and courage to do things differently. “Producing new things is easy for me” associates with innovativeness. “I don’t get nervous even though sometimes I’m in a hurry” refers to being able to operate under pressure. The assertion, “I often find more solutions to problems than others” is connected to problem solving, and “I feel uncomfortable in the company of people who are strangers to me” associates with sociability and networking.

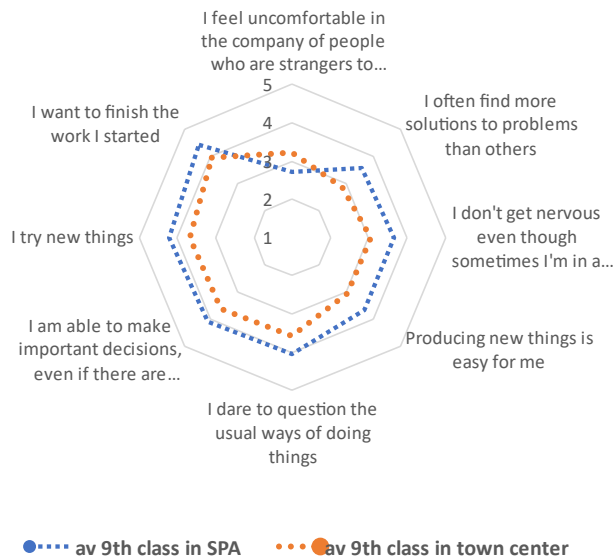


Figure 2. The results of entrepreneurial abilities.

When comparing young people in a lower secondary school in the town center to young people in a SPA, the results indicate that young people in a SPA were:

- more target-oriented,
- more creative,
- more certain,
- more courageous,
- more innovative,
- more pressure resistant,
- better problem-solvers, and
- based on the reverse question, SPA youngsters did not find it unpleasant to be in social and networking situations

The results indicate that both groups achieved their best scores in target orientation. On the other hand, both groups achieved their lowest scores in problem-solving. The reserve question related to sociability and networking skills revealed that young people in the SPA were more social and networking-capable than those in the town center.

The results clearly showed that young people in SPAs were more target-oriented, creative, uncertainty tolerant, risk-oriented, innovative, and had the courage to do things differently, had pressure resistance, were problem-solvers, and were also more socially capable of networking. The results show that young people (15–16 years old) in SPAs seem to have more advanced entrepreneurial abilities than those of the same age in the town center.

The inquiry also included some questions related to entrepreneurship education. For the question, “The teaching of my school promotes understanding of entrepreneurial operations,” the students replied as follows: the SPA school had a score of 3.28 and the town center school had a score of 3.07. Thus, the results indicate that SPA youngsters feel more aware of enterprise operations than students in the town school.

Discussion

Becoming an entrepreneur is a way of making it possible to live in a desired place rather than having to move elsewhere for work. This is especially the case in sparsely populated regions where entrepreneurs are in the crucial role of creating jobs and welfare for regions that otherwise would suffer from a

decreasing population. Yet, in Finland, entrepreneurial education is a vital component of enlightening young people to this option. In the EU and thus in Finland, it is essential to an individual's survival, to help an individual to cope with changing economic demands (Erkkilä 2000).

More precisely, the goal of EE is to learn several competences and learning outcomes to be able to act as an entrepreneur (Bacigalupo et al. 2016). The goals of entrepreneurship education are targeted to understanding entrepreneurship, learning to be entrepreneurial, and becoming an entrepreneur (Hytti and O'Gorman 2004; Kirby 2004). According to replies related to entrepreneurial education, the study indicates that the students felt that the level of entrepreneurial education was higher in SPAs than in the town center. From the point of SPAs, this result is important for enabling young people to seriously consider entrepreneurship as a future option, allowing them to freely choose their living area. From the point of young people in the town center, the result is sad. The weak level of entrepreneurial knowledge, and thus EE, narrows their future living possibilities. The result stresses that the quality of EE varies by locality. For to guarantee similar and equal entrepreneurial skills for youth regardless of place of residence, it is essential to take care of the high EE teaching level throughout the country.

According to the study results, rural youth have better entrepreneurial abilities than urban youth. This supports Kibler's (2013) research, finding that the childhood environment has an impact on entrepreneurship. Young people living in the city live in an area that has more employment opportunities than the countryside. Entrepreneurship is therefore not necessary for employment in urban regions. Self-employment is more common in rural areas, and it is likely that more young people get to familiarize themselves with entrepreneurship in rural areas. As a result, they may see entrepreneurship as a future option from an early age. It is easier to become interested in, and believe that you can succeed as, an entrepreneur when you know what it means in practice.

Young people in rural areas seem to have more entrepreneurial skills. One of the reasons for the development of these skills may be that there is not necessarily a hobby-like activity available in rural areas without organizing it yourself. In unstimulated areas you need an activity, ideation, experiments, and solutions so that there is enough to do in your free time. In addition, there are small networks in the countryside and new acquaintances are welcome. According to this survey, rural youth feel less uncomfortable in the company of strangers than urban youth. In the city, class sizes are larger and young

people have more opportunities for networking. However, acting in large networks can be frightening for urban youths.

From the point of studied entrepreneurial abilities, such as target orientation, creativity, uncertainty tolerance, risk oriented and differently thinking, innovativeness, pressure tolerance, problem-solving, and social competence, the results indicate that, for people in SPAs, it is possible to freely choose a living region they want to live (Ala-Rämi 2007). Therefore, increased interest in living in the countryside will broaden the usually narrow economic structure and hinder decreased municipality services. While only one-fifth of the young rural population was determined to move away (Muilu and Rusanen 2003), proper entrepreneurial abilities may lead to new entrepreneurial openings, and thus enable future “good lives” for four-fifths of the young population in SPAs.

To keep SPAs populated, or even to increase their populations, it may be necessary to change regional policies that are currently focused on slowing down the depopulation. To raise entrepreneurial activity and increase population in SPAs, novel entrepreneurial information and support of entrepreneurial skills among young people are necessary.

Conclusion

Despite being “the happiest country” and also economically among the wealthiest part of the world, Finland’s economic growth in recent years has been very weak, being between 0.7–3.4% in 2021 (Bank of Finland 2022). The structural change affecting industry has driven many industrial sectors (including forestry) into problems of competitiveness. Kymenlaakso is plagued with continuous structural change. Industrial production has decreased, and as a result, jobs have been lost. The population’s pronounced aging is also creating its own challenges for the province’s development. The low level of business creation in Finland is worrying, especially for the future of SPAs. Entrepreneurship should be an attractive and viable alternative to paid employment. There are few reasons for the low numbers, but the most important way to change this is to encourage it by teaching the necessary knowledge and skills, as well as the requisite attitudes.

This study indicates that, based on their entrepreneurial abilities, young people can increase entrepreneurial activity in SPAs. Thus, entrepreneurship can be a real and valid alternative to paid employment for young people, making it possible to live in the countryside. One of the secrets to happiness

might be found in being able to make a living in the place you want to be without having to move to find work.

From society's point of view, it seems possible to strengthen the economic structure and contribute to economic development and sustainable communities via increased entrepreneurial activity by young people. Additionally, in Finland and in other SPAs and countries, young people's entrepreneurial skills are even more important for keeping municipalities populated and economically active.

This study's value is the descriptive comparison of the entrepreneurial ability approach between SPAs and the urban environment. Both sparsely and densely populated areas benefit from entrepreneurial education, but in the case of SPAs, the entrepreneurial skills of young people are even more important for keeping their municipalities populated and economically active. The young people in SPAs have entrepreneurial abilities to utilize in the future. The municipalities located in SPAs need to acknowledge their ability to increase entrepreneurship, and that, instead of moving to growth centers, they might live happily as entrepreneurs, surrounded by nature and peace.

Clean nature and environment offer entrepreneurial possibilities for. ex. in tourism and business via new digitalized outcomes. When an international team arrived in autumn 2022 to search for the secret of happiness, one of their assessments was the accessibility of untouched nature, which is, even from the metropolitan area, only a half hour drive away. Alongside equal education and medical care, perhaps one aspect of being the "happiest people in the world" can be found in the restorative power of native nature and tranquility.

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Biographical Sketch

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Research and Professional Experience: Dr Taipale-Erävala acts as an Associate Professor at the University of Eastern Finland. Her research expertise and interest are developing and ensuring competencies of micro and SMEs business in changing business environments. She is also interested in innovation, business models, knowledge management, tourism and entrepreneurship education. Additionally, Dr. Taipale-Erävala is evolved in entrepreneurial education and training over 20 years and having experience of tourism entrepreneurship.

Professional Appointments: -

Honors: -

Publications from the Last 3 Years (10/2022 – 10/2019):

Ala-Rämi, Katariina and Kyllikki Taipale-Erävala (forthcoming). "Sparsely populated northern regions as unique tourism destinations— Opportunities and challenges of cross-border tourism between Finland and Russia." In *Sustainable Tourism: Frameworks, Practices, and Innovative Solutions*, eds. Thomas Walker, Gabrielle Machnik Kekesi, Victoria Kelly, Dora Grimm, Kalima Vico. Palgrave-Macmillan.

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entrepreneurial culture.”] Abstraktikirja [Abstract book] YKTT2020. Mikkeli.

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Research and Professional Experience: Dr. Ala-Rämi works at the Kerttu Saalasti Institute, MicroENTRE, Microentrepreneurship Research Group, University of Oulu. Her research focuses on microenterprise competitiveness, networks and environments, regional resilience and regional development. In particular, she is interested in the activities of small enterprises in sparsely populated areas: what is their impact on the business environment and how the region and regional actors should support these enterprises, which are key for the regional economy and regional resilience. Ala-Rämi has worked on various research and development projects and has extensive experience in a variety of specialist roles and in supervising and teaching at university level at different degree levels.

Professional Appointments: -

Honors: -

Publications from the Last 3 Years (10/2022 – 10/2019):

- Ala-Rämi, Katariina and Kyllikki Taipale-Erävala. (forthcoming). “Sparsely populated northern regions as unique tourism destinations— Opportunities and challenges of cross-border tourism between Finland and Russia.” In *Sustainable Tourism: Frameworks, Practices, and Innovative Solutions*, eds. Thomas Walker, Gabrielle Machnik Kekesi, Victoria Kelly, Dora Grimm, Kalima Vico. Palgrave-Macmillan.
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Research and Professional Experience: Leena Eskola is a doctoral student at University of Oulu Business School. She works also as a teacher at the vocational school in Finland. Her main research interests are Entrepreneurship Education and its implementation, cooperation between educational institutions and companies, Entrepreneurship Education as a concept and how it is understood and on the effects of entrepreneurship education models on entrepreneurial intentions.

Professional Appointments:

Honors:

Publications from the Last 3 Years:

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