



▲ FIGURE 1. A group discussion concluding the co-designing session. Photograph: Minna Kovero, 2024.

Villainen Design Workshop

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The Villainen Design Workshop was a co-creative workshop that brought together crafters, artists, designers, and entrepreneurs to collaboratively develop ideas for wool-based products and services. Held over two days in April 2024 at Taito Lappi in Rovaniemi, the workshop explored northern nature, craft traditions, and local wool through a mix of lectures, hands-on making, and collaborative design, with attention to wool's sensory and material qualities. The workshop aimed to support craft innovation through the exchange and synergy of diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives. All ideas generated during the workshop were shared openly and made freely available to both participants and the wider public.



▲ **FIGURE 2.** Raw wool and yarn from Vanhala Sheep Farm. Photographs: Minna Kovero, 2024.



▲ **FIGURE 3.** Inspirational material and sketching of the concepts. Photographs: Tatiana Kravtsov, 2024.



► **FIGURE 4.** Elina Härkönen presenting her lecture on natural dyeing with mushrooms and other plants. Photograph: Elina Luiro, 2024.

The *Villainen Design Workshop* took place over one weekend in April 2024 at Taito Lappi in Rovaniemi, and was thematically centred on northern nature, traditional craft practices, and locally produced wool. Particular emphasis was placed on the physical and sensory qualities of wool as well as on embodied human–material relationships. The two-day programme combined wool-related lectures, hands-on creative activities, and collaborative design sessions to develop innovative ideas for wool-based products and services. The collaborative design process was structured in two parts, beginning on the first day and continuing on the second, to support the emergence of initial concepts and their further development.

Each day, between twelve and fourteen participants attended the workshop. They were based in Rovaniemi and came from diverse professional backgrounds: some were artists, designers, and craft practitioners, whilst others worked in tourism and art education fields. Despite their varied experiences, all shared a strong interest in wool and wool-based craft practices.

The workshop began with a round of introductions, during which participants shared their backgrounds and personal connections to wool. To initiate an embodied engagement with the material, two large pieces of raw wool, in natural white and brown, were passed around the group, inviting participants to touch, hold, and hug the material, and to notice its soft texture and earthy scent.

The first lecture was held by Karoliina Erkinjuntti, a textile designer based in Rovaniemi. Karoliina shared how the home region, its surroundings, and nature inspire her design process. Her lecture was followed by a sheep farmer, Johanna Alamikkotervo from Vanhala Sheep Farm, who shared the possibilities of Finnsheep wool and the unique features of the Finnsheep breed. Johanna brought examples of a wide range of raw Finnsheep wool and yarn in natural shades as well as practical information on the specific qualities of the fibre (Figure 2).

Following the two lectures, the workshop moved into the first collaborative design session, which focused on generating creative and innovative ideas for wool-based products and services. Drawing on



▲ **FIGURE 5.** Process pictures during the knitting pattern design workshop held by Karoliina Erkinjuntti. Photographs: Minna Kovero, 2024.

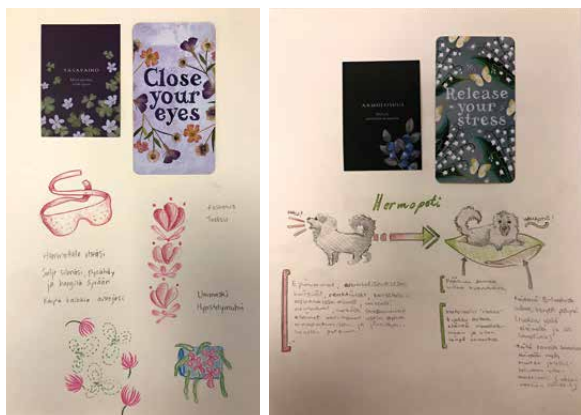


the lectures, participants were invited to develop ideas that integrate locally produced wool, northern nature, and traditional craft practices, and to embody human-material relationships. An emphasis was placed on the multisensory qualities of wool. Participants were encouraged to consider both local residents and tourists as potential target audiences. As an initial point of inspiration, participants were asked to select two cards featuring nature-related images and short quotes. Working in small groups, participants used these cards to envision possible concepts and then illustrated the ideas on paper (Figure 3). The session concluded with a group discussion, during which participants shared their concepts and collectively reflected on their potential (Figure 1).

On the second day, Elina Härkönen, an art education lecturer and an expert at VillaInno, delivered a lecture on natural dyeing. She shared her experience dyeing wool with plant- and mushroom-derived natural dyes, as well as her practice of knitting and creating art with naturally dyed yarns (Figure 4). This lecture was followed by a hands-on workshop led by Karoliina Erkinjuntti, focusing on the pattern design of mittens. During the workshop, Erkin-

juntti guided the participants through the process of designing a knitting pattern on a paper template of her own design. The process integrates creative expression with mathematical and logical thinking, as visual motifs are translated into symmetrical or asymmetrical structures, taking into account stitch spacing and the interaction between two or more colours. Whilst pattern design can also be done digitally in specialised applications, the paper template including mitten proportions and knitting instructions used in the workshop offered an accessible tool for beginners. The creative activity offered participants insight into the pattern design process, particularly the translation of visual imagery into knitted language (Figure 5).

Together, the lecture and the creative workshop provided an important source of inspiration and conceptual grounding for the subsequent co-design session. Various materials, such as raw wool and dyed yarn, were offered for exploration, helping participants further develop their ideas for new products and services. The workshop concluded with shared reflection and discussion on the generated ideas and concepts.



▲ **FIGURE 6.** Sketches reflect the process of co-developing ideas for wool-based products. Photographs: Tatiana Kravtsov, 2024.

Co-designed ideas and concepts

The co-design sessions resulted in a diverse yet thematically coherent set of ideas centred on local wool, northern nature and traditional craft practices, and embodied human–material relationships. Rather than focusing on finished products, many concepts combined material practice with experiential, educational, and service-oriented approaches, reflecting the participants’ shared interest in slow design, sustainability, and multisensory engagement (Figure 6).

Scent & Warmth for Relaxation and Restful Sleep

- **DIY Sleep Mask Kit:** A guided embroidery and finishing package for creating your own personalised sleep mask.
- **Finnish Wool Sleep Mask:** Designed using various wool qualities and natural shades to support deep rest and gentle dreams.
- **Wool & Herbs for Your Feet:** Woollen socks enhanced with northern herbs to promote relaxation and better sleep.
- **Woollen Herbal Pillow:** A wool-based pillow or cushion filled with locally sourced calming and healing herbs.
- **Wool and Herbs in Reflexology:** Integrating the therapeutic qualities of wool and northern plants into body–mind and reflexology practices.

Wool for Emotional Support for Children and Youth

- **Pocket Wool:** A small piece of soft wool carried in the pocket to provide a sense of safety and comfort in stressful situations (e.g. new environments, exams, dentist visits).
- **Wool Bracelet:** A tactile and calming accessory designed to help manage fear and anxiety.

Local Wool, Natural Dyes & Seasonal Rhythms

- **Wool Calendar for Enthusiasts and Sheep Farmers:** Highlighting sheep-related seasonal cycles, shearing times, and harvesting periods for local dye plants.
- **Surprise DIY Dyeing and Knitting Kit:** Featuring local wool, instructions for dyeing with kitchen leftovers, and knitting patterns for socks or mittens.
- **Naturally Dyed Sheepskin Printing:** A service or DIY concept for decorating sheepskins using plant- and mushroom-based dyes.

Wool for Everyday Wellbeing

- **Raw Wool Products for Relaxation and Grounding.**
- **Personalised Woollen Toys and Baskets:** Custom colour-matched and named items.
- **Wool Products for Pets:** Natural and sustainable wool-based solutions for furry companions.

Wool-Based Services and Experiences

- **Winter Wool Sock Walk:** A guided grounding experience in nature, walking outdoors in wool socks.
- **“Knit with a Grandmother” Experience:** Private knitting sessions with a skilled elder, hosted at her home or yours, shared over coffee and pastries.
- **Slow Design Courses:** Workshops focusing on local wool, natural dyes, and mindful making.
- **Cross-Cultural Wool & Craft Knowledge Exchange:** Courses and services fostering the sharing of wool-related skills across cultures and generations.