



▲ FIGURE 1. Yarns of Piessan Lammastila. Photograph: Elina Luiro, 2024.

Wool Thinking Workshop

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The Wool Thinking workshop brought together wool enthusiasts, educators, craft-people, designers, and entrepreneurs for co-creative design thinking. The workshop combined lectures, participatory design sessions, and a guided farm visit to explore wool as a cultural, material, and economic resource. Through storytelling, branding exercises, and collaborative moodboard work, participants developed ideas for wool-based products and services grounded in local heritage. The workshop demonstrated the potential of design thinking and cross-sector collaboration to strengthen emerging wool businesses and to foster innovation in wool crafts and cultural tourism.

The *Wool Thinking workshop* was a co-creative, design-thinking effort with tools for business innovation in the wool industry. We provided a participatory exercise exploring the basic principles of design thinking and how to apply them to foster innovation and problem-solving methods within emerging local wool businesses. The workshop was organised at two separate locations to provide a dynamic and immersive wool experience, including a visit to Piessan Lammastila (Piessa's Sheep Farm) and a lecture as well as participatory sessions held at Liakan Nuorisoseuran talo (Liakka Youth Club House).

The participants included local wool enthusiasts, craft course teachers, knitting entrepreneurs and designers with a shared interest in wool. The first day began with an introduction to the VillaInno project by the design team, followed by a lecture from our guest speaker, Erika Appelström and featuring aspects of wool branding and the wool mar-



FIGURE 2.
Participants
brainstorming at
the co-development
session. Photograph:
Tanya Kravtsov, 2025.

ket: “Brand Power for SMEs: Storytelling for Brand Impact, Heritage, Case Studies and Free Tools Combined”. Her session featured simple steps to improve a craft brand for local emerging entrepreneurs as well as a presentation about free tools to support branding work: all this, and focused on heritage and storytelling.

Ms. Appelström’s presentation featured the main aspects to consider as a wool entrepreneur, such as storytelling, customer experience, values and visual identity. She presented the importance of branding in supporting emerging wool entrepreneurs to participants, showcasing a variety of case studies. Ms. Appelström shared her background as a designer for wool magazines such as Novita, as well as the rebranding of Tukuwool and Anno, both of which are Finnish companies.

The group continued to the collaborative session at Nuorisoseuran talo (the Youth Club House), where

they were presented with basic wool and art materials in order to create moodboards and brainstorm product and service ideas (Figure 2). The session started with brief introductions from the participants, followed by a discussion of the aspects of product and service development using local wool.

The group began the co-development sessions focused on storytelling and local heritage, with participants discussing and considering how to present innovative wool product ideas to local audiences. The outcome was a series of moodboards that included collage elements and text-based concepts (Figure 3). The working groups presented their ideas to the rest of the group and engaged in a discussion session.

On the second day, the group participated in a guided visit to Piessan Lammastila (Piessa’s Sheep Farm) in Tornio, hosted by Kirsi Ylipiessa, a farm owner and entrepreneur from the Tornio area. She



is an engineer, farmer and crafter working in farming and wool. She has extensive experience in wool production and is interested in ways to innovate in the use and applications of traditional wool. During the visit, she discussed the details of her farm business: profitability, sustainability, meat production, animal welfare, sheep grazing in the area, yarn production, and fibre experimentation. The visit offered participants a firsthand experience as well as the opportunity to ask questions. During the visit, the group greeted the sheep at Piessa's barn, visited Ylipiessa's home, and toured the storage for wool products. The participants had the opportunity to get to know and sense the wool, and inquire about her yarn production, which include a wide variety of

yarns, carded wool, ready-made knitting packages, and sheepskins (Figures 1 & 4).

Following the visit, the group moved to the second part of the session, during which participants brainstormed innovative ideas for wool services and activities for local audiences and tourists, resulting in a series of moodboards featuring collage elements and text-based concepts. Together, the lectures, guided visits and collaborative workshops provided the participants with a co-creating experience aimed at conceiving new ideas and services using local wool; with these ideas being summarised in the following list:



Co-designed ideas and concepts

WELLBEING AND EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- *Feel the Living Finnwool*

- Book idea for Families, Children, Kindergarten, and Schools. 'Sensory Book for Everyone': feeling rooted and reconnecting to your inner nature, made with leftover wool, yarn, Finnish wool; the book can show knitted patterns, and various uses of yarn and wool. The book includes a QR code that links to additional materials about sheep.

WELLNESS / WELLBEING EXPERIENCES

- *Hellivat Helmet*

- DIY package & workshop to make your own bead in a group or alone.
- 'The bead making helps the participants to have a moment to connect to the material and feel present. Anyone can design their own bead, using naturally dyed wool or the natural shades of undyed wool. It's a quick process: you can use leftover, discarded, or unprocessed wool. The bead can be gifted, or the participant can make many to create their own jewelry piece, and the woollen beads can be mixed with oils for the skin'.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

- *Villa Piilaakso Suomeen*

- Wool for the football fields: to replace the plastic grass carpets.

PRODUCT DESIGN & INTERIOR DESIGN

- *Design tiles & panels*

- Product design of felted acoustic panels made by local designers and inspired by local elements.

- *Alvar Aalto products*

- Collaborating with the Alvar Aalto Foundation to design carpets, wool mats, and other Alvar Aalto-inspired products to promote the 100th anniversary and create a collection of products designed by local designers from Lapland.

SERVICE DESIGN/RECREATIVE WORKSHOPS

- *Villa & Väri Retriitti*

- Local knowledge holders and crafters come together to offer a retreat to learn about natural dyes, the process of dyeing with local plants and pigments, and wool spinning. The participants can make their own pieces and products. Examples of this collaboration:
 - A biologist can offer insights into plants in a greenhouse to teach how to cultivate your own plants for natural dyes.
 - A local craft artist can offer a spinning course with your own naturally dyed wool or a knitting session.