

Case study report (Code FI9C)

The Come Home project in Punkalaidun municipality in 2018-2020

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The report is subject to possible changes due to approval process by the European Commission.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
EU	European Union
NGO	Non-government organization
UAA	Utilized Agricultural Area
WP	Work Package

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Introduction

This case study report presents actions for trying to counteract the depopulation in a small Punkalaidun municipality in south-western Finland. The case study is one of 30 RURALIZATION WP5.2 case studies. The detailed guidelines for these studies and reports were presented in WP5 Task 5.2 input paper in July 2020 (Sivini, Vitale & Kovach, 2020).

In this report, we focus more closely to one development project called “Tule Kotiin” (“Come Home”). The small rural municipality of Punkalaidun in south-western Finland has suffered from depopulation for years. The active community of public and private actors have tried to find ways to turn the migration back to Punkalaidun. By the Come Home project the local public administration and local Lutheran parish together with local stakeholders and residents made efforts to make the municipality Punkalaidun wider known as a good place to live and thus to attract possible newcomers and returnees to move there. That project was implemented in two periods with slightly varying emphasis from April 2018 to April 2019 and from May 2019 to April 2020. The project had some originality both the administrative side and by the operational side.

To get a better understanding about the background of those migration efforts, this report also features an outlook to the regional and local context of the practice. The outlook is based mostly on statistical data and history information about the geographic, demographics, social, economic, labour and livelihood features of Punkalaidun region.

The analysis of this practise in this case study was deepened by the qualitative data collected in semi-structured in-depth interviews from 22 persons (11 females, 11 males). The interviews, of which 6 face-to-face, 9 by phone and 7 by Microsoft Teams were done between Oct 1st 2020 and Jan 3rd 2021. Interviewees were local inhabitants (native, newcomers) and entrepreneurs, local NGO persons, municipal administrative officers, project personnel and some experts and stakeholder representatives from organisations outside Punkalaidun. The focus group discussion about this case study was held on the 10th of May 2021 with the municipal local government. The preliminary results were discussed in a webinar on the 3rd of June 2021.

A family or a single person does not usually make the decision of moving home to another area than current location impulsively. It needs time and suitable circumstances regarding

e.g. the residence or job for actual moving. The Come Home project was running only a relatively short period of time when considering the migration patterns of Punkalaidun. Therefore in this report we consider the newcomer issue and population challenges wider than just from the two-year period of project point of view. Also the interviews dealt wider the features of Punkalaidun than just the evaluation and impacts of that certain project.

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Context

Regional and local features

The Finnish administrative structure has three main levels: the national (state), the regional (provinces) and the local (municipalities). The state takes care of the national administrative tasks. Current 18 provinces (maakunta) are organised around one main capital town.

At the local level municipalities are in charge of the actual provision of basic services for their inhabitants: education, kindergarten, healthcare, social services, water and energy supply, rescue services, waste management, environmental services, cultural activities, libraries etc. The municipalities have created many common organisations for specific tasks that ask for pooled resources (e.g. special healthcare, rescue operations, vocational education). The municipalities have a right to collect income and real estate taxes and the state provides a special subsidy to finance part of the tasks. Business development, rural/urban development, business consultancy services etc. are not obligatory for the municipalities, but they are actively engaged with these activities (Kuhmonen & Ruuska, 2020).

Punkalaidun is one of the 310 municipalities, established in 1639. It is located in the south-western corner of the province of Pirkanmaa (WGS 84: 61.11°N, 23.10°E) about 70 km south-west from the province capital Tampere. The oldest villages in current area of Punkalaidun have been situated there already in the 11th century. Typical peasant type culture has developed by the river of Punkalaidun where the fruitful river valleys and natural sites for good agricultural land locate (Punkalaidun municipality, 2021).

The surface of the municipality area is quite low-lying about 80-145 meters above the sea level. Total area of Punkalaidun is 364 km² of which only about 3 km² is water-covered, in the whole Finland inland waters cover over 10 % of total area. By contrast, in Punkalaidun there were 13,227 ha utilized agricultural area (UAA) in 2019, about 36 % of total area while in Finland the share of UAA is only about 7.5 %. Forests cover 208 km², 57 % of total area. Thus, over 90 % of the land area of Punkalaidun is agricultural or forest land (LUKE, 2020a).

There are two Natura2000 areas that cover partly Punkalaidun area, both of them mostly bog areas (Figure 1):



FI0200100, Telkunsuo, SAC/SPA, 902 ha of which about 64 ha in Punkalaidun



FI0200094, Isosuo, SAC, 419 ha of which about 370 ha in Punkalaidun

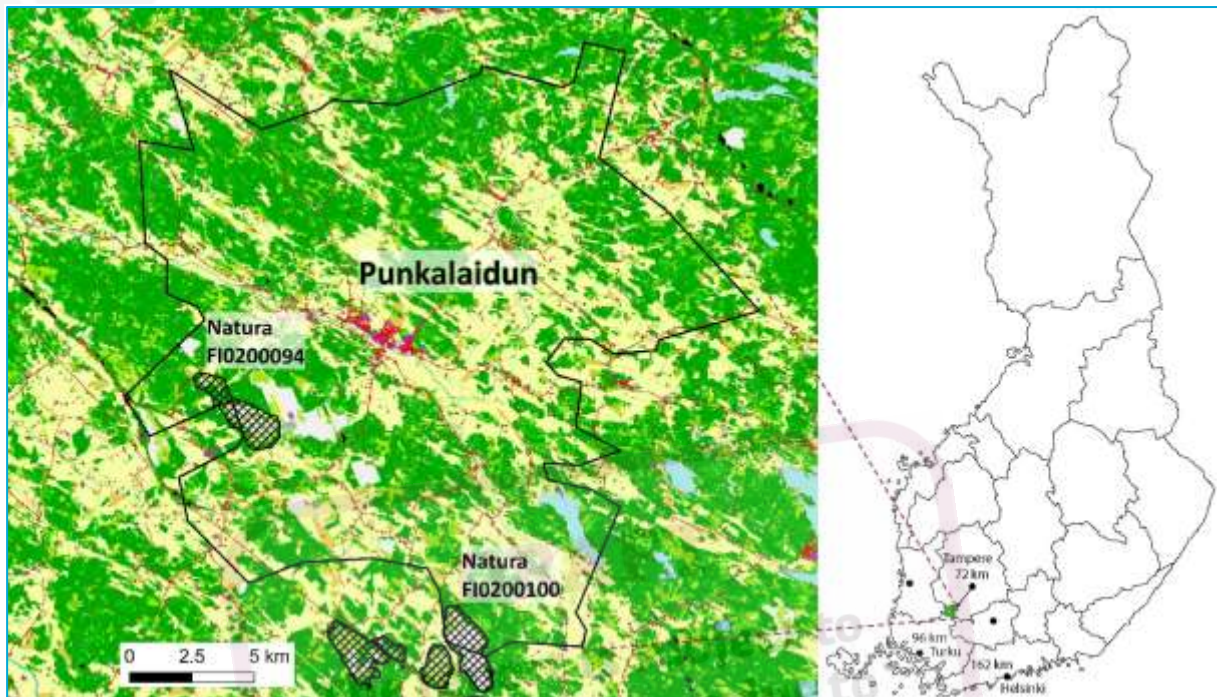


Figure 1. Corine Land Cover 2018 and Natura 2000 areas in Punkalaidun.

The population of Punkalaidun was 2828 in 2019, by population it was the 228th biggest municipality in Finland. Punkalaidun is sparsely populated. Population density is 7.8 people/km², while the average in Finland is 18.2 people/km² and The province of Pirkanmaa 41.1 people/km². During the past 20 years (2000-2019), the population of Punkalaidun has decreased from by 915 inhabitants (-24 %). The gender balance has been negative for females since 2006. Females were 48.7 % of Punkalaidun inhabitants in 2019.

The average age of people in Punkalaidun is 50.7 years (Finland 43.2, The province of Pirkanmaa 42.6). Population is getting older. In last 20 years, the average age has risen by 5.1 years. The share of 65 and more years old people increased from 26 % to 35 % and people from 15 to 64 years decreased from 55 % to 53 %. The people under 15 years old were 13 % of Punkalaidun population in 2019 (Figure 2).

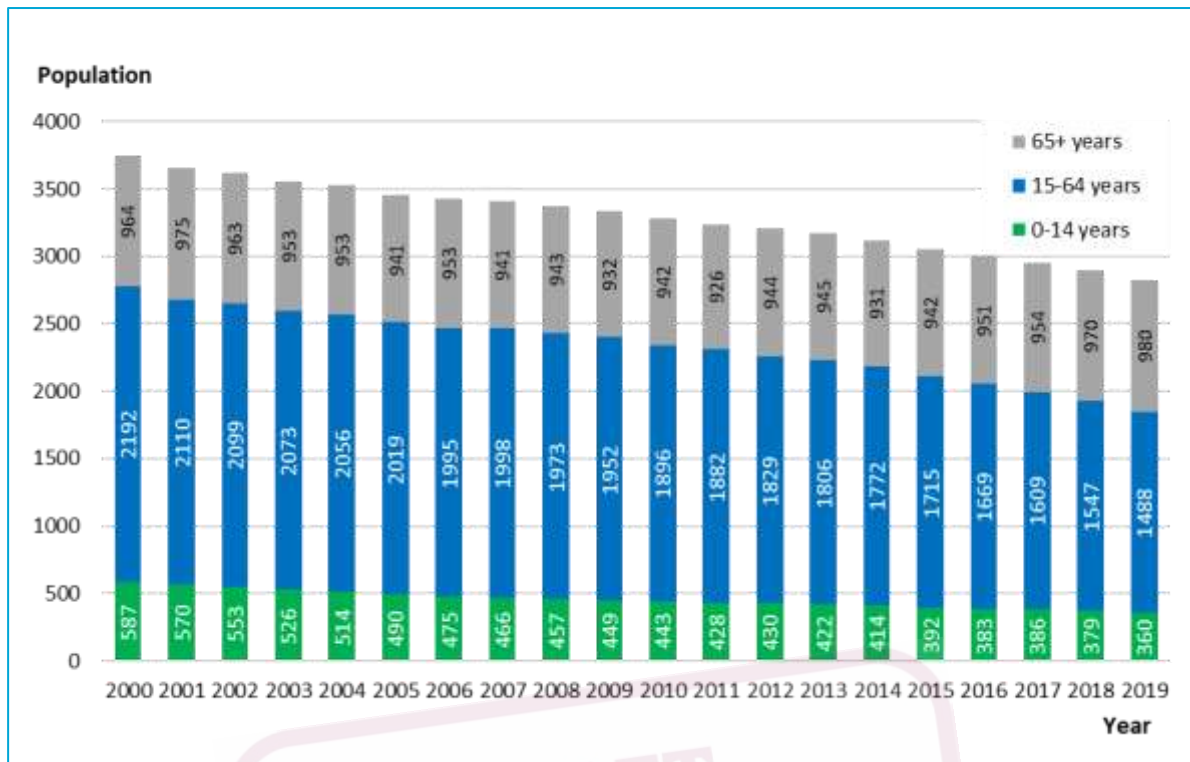


Figure 2. Population of Punkalaidun by age groups, years 2000-2019.

Source: derived from Statistics Finland (Population structure).

The population dependency ratio¹ has gone up from 70 in 2000 to 90 in 2019 and working age population from 15 to 64 years has fallen quite sharply. In fact, only the number of males over 64 years has grown in this twenty-year period (Figure 3).

The international net migration has increased population in groups under 65 years but not yet enough to compensate the decline. In last twenty years, the population net increase has been negative both by difference of births and deaths and by intermunicipal in-out-migration (Statistics Finland, 2020c). On the contrary, the international migration has been positive but not strong enough to balance the total population decline (Figure 4). The depopulation is quite a challenge in Punkalaidun.

¹ Population dependency ratio is calculated as the total number of persons age 0-14 and the number of persons aged 65 and older divided by the number of persons aged 15-64. The figure obtained is multiplied by one hundred.

D5.2 30 CASE STUDIES ON RURAL NEW COMERS, NEW ENTRANTS TO FARMING AND SUCCESSORS

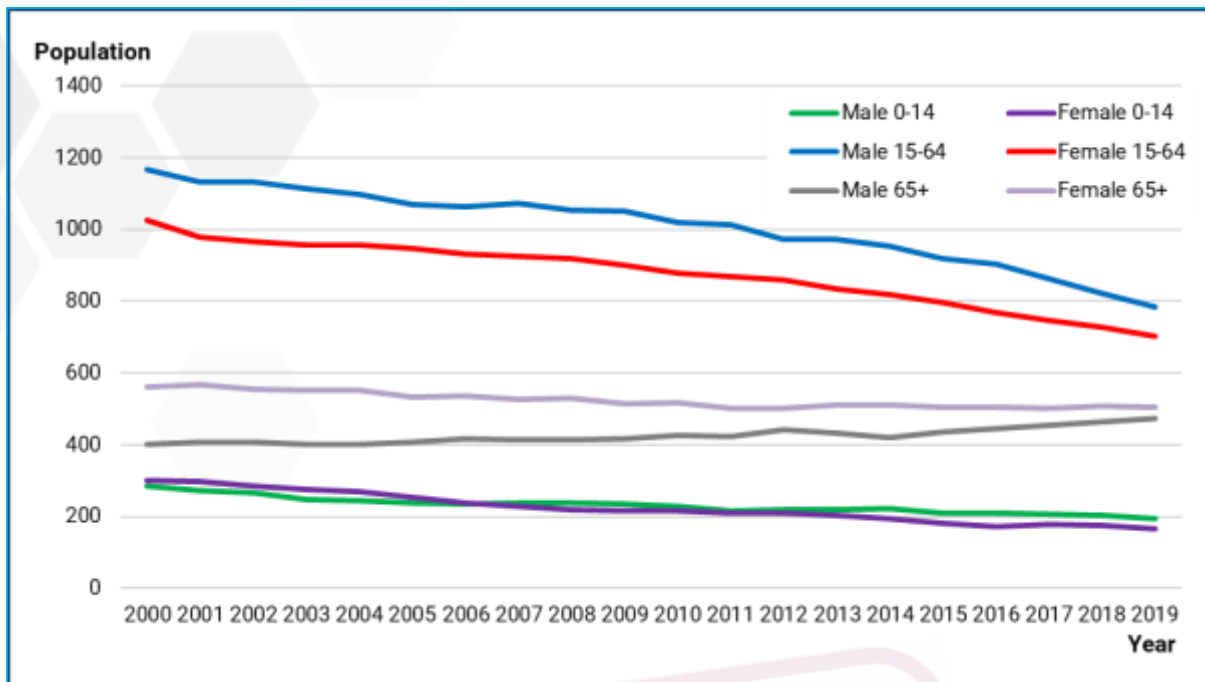


Figure 3. The population of Punkalaidun by age groups and gender, years 2000-2019. Source: derived from Statistics Finland (Population structure).

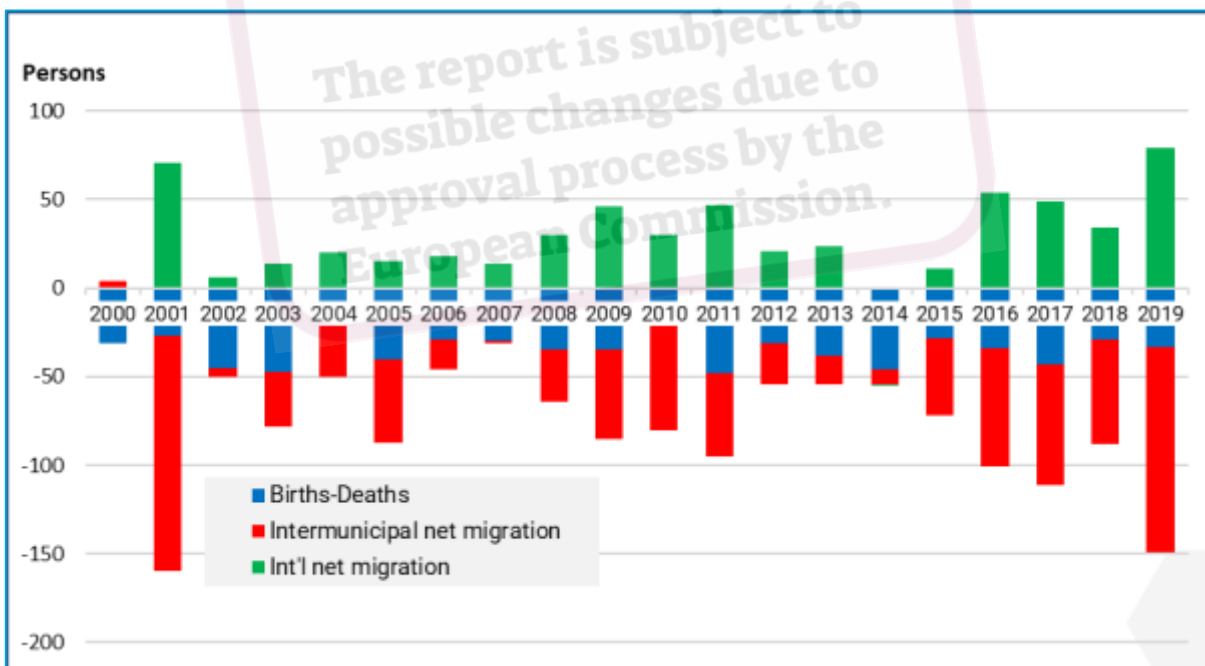


Figure 4. Population variation by sources in Punkalaidun, years 2010-2019. Source: derived from Statistics Finland (Population, migration).

Education

The education level in Punkalaidun is lower than in the province of Pirkanmaa or compared with national level. About one third of the inhabitants of Punkalaidun are without upper secondary qualification while in Pirkanmaa or in Finland only about 25 percent of people are without that education level. On the other hand, about one third of the citizens of Finland or The province of Pirkanmaa have tertiary level education while in Punkalaidun 20 percent of people have that higher level education (Table 1). Females are more educated than males both in Punkalaidun, provincial and national level.

Persons aged 15 or over		Punkalaidun	Pirkanmaa	Finland
		municipality	province	
Without upper secondary qualification	Total	35 %	24 %	26 %
	Males	36 %	24 %	28 %
	Females	33 %	24 %	25 %
With at least upper secondary qualification	Total	66 %	76 %	74 %
	Males	64 %	76 %	73 %
	Females	67 %	77 %	75 %
With tertiary level qualification	Total	20 %	33 %	32 %
	Males	17 %	30 %	28 %
	Females	24 %	36 %	36 %

Table 8. Population aged 15 or over by level of education in 2019

Labor

The labor force of Punkalaidun was 1120 persons, 39 % of total population in 2018. The number of employed was 1042 persons, 36 % of the total population and 67 % of the working age (15-64 years) population. In the province of Pirkanmaa, the occupation rate was 71 and 72 at national level in 2018.

Due to decreasing and aging population, the labor force of Punkalaidun has decreased 15 % in last ten-year period and the economic dependency ratio has gone upwards to 177.9 in 2018 which is much higher than average in the province of Pirkanmaa of the whole Finland (Figure 5). The unemployment rate, on the contrary, is lower in Punkalaidun than at regional or national level (Figure 6). In December 2019 there were 74 unemployed jobseekers, the

unemployment rate was 6.4 % while in the province of Pirkanmaa it was 9.9 % and in the whole Finland 9.8 % (TEM 2020). It is remarkable though that, due to demography in Punkalaidun, since 2014 there have been more retired persons than employed persons (Statistics Finland, 2020b). In recent years the unemployment rate of Punkalaidun has been two to three percentage point lower among females than among males.

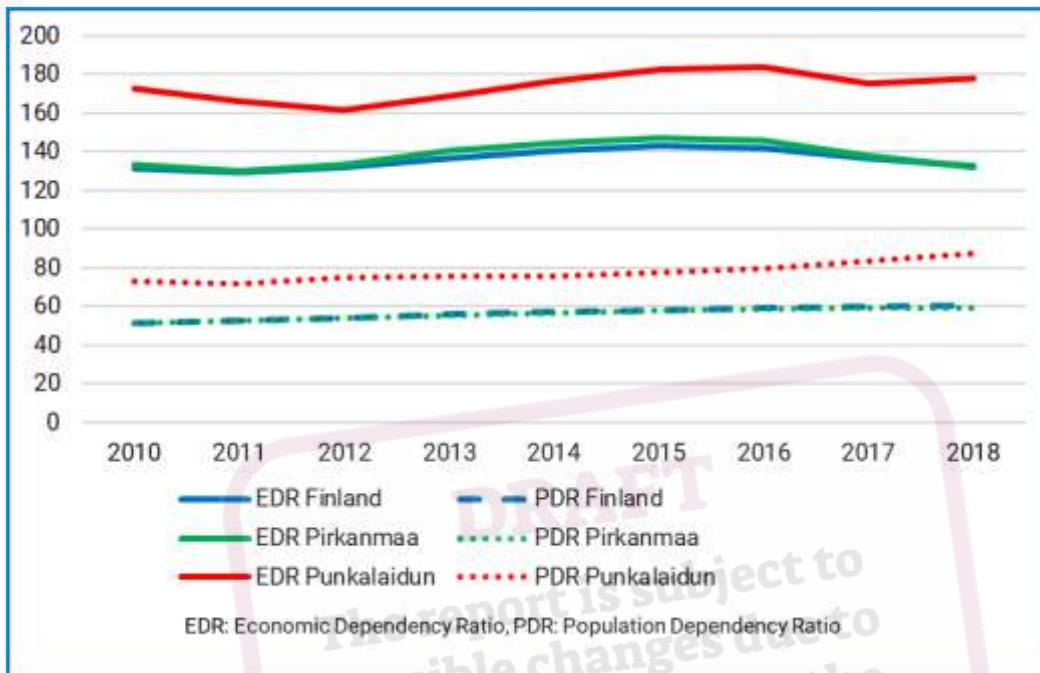


Figure 16: Economic and Population Dependency Ratios 2010-2018.

Source: derived from Statistics Finland.

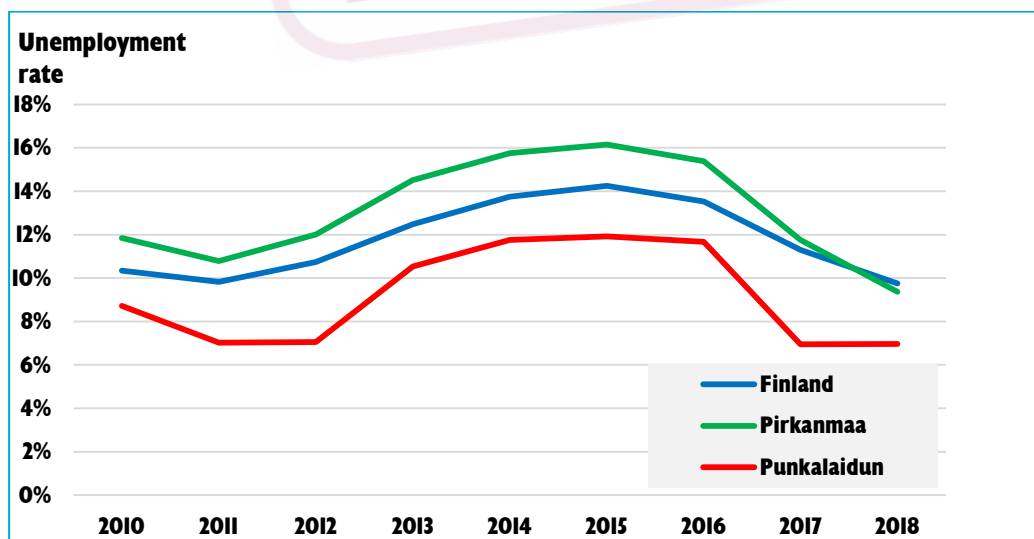


Figure 6: Unemployment rate in Punkalaidun, the province of Pirkanmaa and Finland 2010-2018.

Source: derived from Statistics Finland.

In rural-urban typology, Punkalaidun is categorized as a rural heartland area. The typology used by Statistics Finland is available in a small grid format (GIS) with seven categories and at the municipality level format with four categories (Helminen et al., 2014; Kuhmonen & Ruuska, 2020). This classification as a rural heartland area for Punkalaidun municipality is evident when we look at the typical land use and demographic characters or occupational structure of Punkalaidun.

Over 90 % of the land area of Punkalaidun is utilized in agriculture and forestry. Primary production of natural resources is an important source of employment. Agriculture, Forestry and fishing jobs had 19 % of employed labour force in 2018 meanwhile in the province of Pirkanmaa it was 2 % and in Finland 3 %. About 17 % of working people of Punkalaidun had jobs in industry and 64 % in services and administration (Table 2)¹. Punkalaidun had 414 enterprises in 2019. There is one bigger industrial employer but most of the enterprises are small, about 1.6 staff-years per enterprise on average (Statistics Finland, 2020b).

	Punkalaidun municipality	Pirkanmaa province	Finland
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	19 %	2 %	3 %
Industry	17 %	16 %	14 %
Private and public services, administration	64 %	82 %	83 %

Table 2: Labor force by industry in 2019.

Source: derived from Statistics Finland (Population, Employment).

Agriculture, multifunctional farming and rural tourism

There were 232 farms in Punkalaidun in 2019. Private persons owned 85.3 % of the farms. Less common were farming syndicates (8.6 %), heirs (4.3 %), limited companies (1.7 %). Males dominate farming in Punkalaidun. Females were the main farmers only in 15 % of the farms. The average age of farmers is 52.5 years, about the same as the average farmer's age in Finland. About 15 % of the farmers are 65 or more years and only 15 % of the farmers are under 40 years old (Ruokavirasto, 2020a).

¹ Division by industries derived from Employment Statistics of Finland (TOL 2008). Industry includes B. Mining and quarrying, C. Manufacturing, D. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply.

The number of active farms has been going down but it does not mean that farmland of those retired farmers would be abandoned. Other farmers usually rent or buy that land and continue to cultivate it. About 54 % of the farms cultivated rented farmland, in addition to their own land, covering 25 % of total UAA of Punkalaidun (Ruokavirasto, 2020a). The average farm size has gone upwards. In 2019, it was 57 ha, about 8 ha above the average Finnish farm size (Figure 7). Due to that structural change, the ownership or occupancy of arable land has become more concentrated.

Cultivated area (UAA) in Punkalaidun is 13.227 ha. In 2019 feed barley and oats covered about a half of total UAA, other grains 20 %, fodder grassland and pasture 15 %, nature management fields 8 %. Various plants and grassland covered the rest of the UAA. About 50 farms had animals for production. Dairy farming is slightly declining but there are still strong beef cattle and pig farming (LUKE, 2020a). In 2019 there were 13 organic farms, 5.6 % of all farms in Punkalaidun (LUKE, 2020b; Ruokavirasto, 2020b). The share of organic farms is lower than in the province of Pirkanmaa (13.5 %) or in Finland (10.7%).

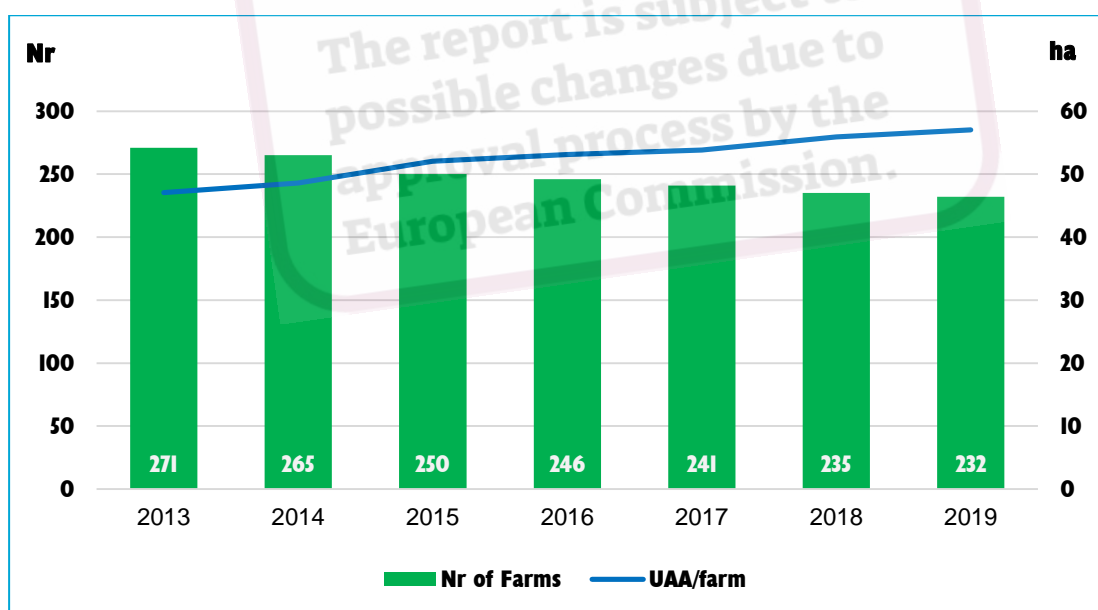


Figure 7: Number of farms and average cultivated area (ha, UAA/farm) in Punkalaidun.

Source: LUKE (2020)

For the agricultural production there are some natural advantages (e.g. climate, field structure) compared with many other parts of Finland. The agricultural traditions and lack of jobs in other industries have kept the significance of agriculture and forestry jobs high in

local employment. A typical farm in Punkalaidun is specializing in animal husbandry or growing grain for cattle feed. The way of using the farmland is quite stable. There have not been any remarkable signs of specializing in any special type, more market oriented plants or branding their agriculture to something special compared with other regions.

There are some special crop farms or multifunctional farms though. According to Aitojamakuja.fi database (Brahea Centre, 2020), in Punkalaidun there are four farms that sell their farm products on the farm or by some other alternative more local market than the centralized food processing and delivery system. That voluntary based database is not necessarily an exhaustive list of all such farms there. Also, farm machinery work services, forestry and bioenergy service works are typical for multifunctional farms (Punkalaidun municipality, 2020).

Tourism is not very significant business in Punkalaidun. A possible tourist attraction is for those who like to stay at peaceful and traditional rural culture and landscape. The old peasant type culture is one of the attractions that collect tourists and visitors. There is an Yli-Kirra museum complex that presents the old peasant type farming, machinery and building culture. Around that museum there is annual show called "Agricultural exhibition of all times" in one weekend of July.

There is also a popular traditional dance hall called "Särkän lava", sometimes called the most beautiful dance hall in Finland because of its location by the narrow cape of Lake Vehkajärvi. Hundreds of people from large area visit there one night in a week in the summer time enjoying dancing and music.

There are no hotels in Punkalaidun but some B&B capacity and summer cottages to rent are available for accommodation (Punkalaidun Municipality, 2021). Most of the leisure time apartments, like summer cottages, 554 buildings in all, are for the owners' own use (Statistics Finland, 2020a). Punkalaidun does not have that strong summer house settlement though because it is not a typical lakeside area. There is only one quite small lake. In many nearby municipalities and especially further in the lake district of central and eastern Finland summertime tourism and summer house settlement has more significance.

Come Home practice context

The general objective of Come Home (Tule Kotiin) project was to find new inhabitants to the municipality of Punkalaidun. At first, the older people were invited to move back to their previous home region. Due to the encouraging results, they started the next stage of the project by which also younger people and families with children have been the target group of possible newcomers.

The background to the Come Home operations comes from the depopulation that has continued for a long time in the area of Punkalaidun municipality. The age structure has become more and more distorted. The population is getting older and the decline of working age population has steepened in last few years. In last two decades, the natural increase (births vs. deaths) of population has been negative every year. The intermunicipal net migration has been positive in the year 2000, after that negative. Only the international net migration has increased the population, but it has not been enough to compensate negative natural increase and intermunicipal migration. (Statistics Finland, 2020c).

The case study area has quite a long settlement history and strong traditions for agriculture and peasant type culture. The farmland takes relatively a much bigger share of land use than on average in Finland. Agriculture and forestry professions still hold a very high position of the labor force of Punkalaidun. On the other hand, there are not that many alternative jobs available. One typical way of returning to Punkalaidun is the succession of the family farm. Also in these cases the employment opportunities are often based on entrepreneurship.

"I am kind of newcomer here, not a returnee. We came here with my husband to run his family farm... and [after leaving the farmed animals] I have set up an enterprise as a side business of this farm" (FI9C/Int.14).

The technical and economic development of agriculture and structural change has led to decreasing needs of human labor and job opportunities also in primary production. There is one bigger manufacturing company which is an important industrial employer. Although there are quite good public services considering the size of population, there is a fear of weakening services due to declining and ageing population and tax revenues. Private services cannot grow and give more jobs either if the population and thus local customers keep declining.

The community of Punkalaidun, both private and public actors and surrounding stakeholders have identified these challenges. They have not given up to finding ways to turn the migration patterns positive even though the population statistics have been so negative. All the local interviewees of this case study knew the reasons why the project like Come Home was necessary and reasonable to implement particularly in Punkalaidun.

“Depopulation is the issue that we have tried to react for years without very good success. We have a municipality where [old] people rather stay here to die than to move somewhere else. So, population is getting older and here are not too many families with children...We have many very small enterprises that can employ only one to two persons...and it is difficult to find successors. In agricultural enterprises it is a bit easier for new generation if it is possible to run a farm as a part-time farmer” (FI9C/ Int.2)

“Population projection of Punkalaidun is clearly the most negative between nearby four municipalities and the depopulation has continued for a long time... Perhaps there has been a need for a common agenda to consider ways to keep a sufficient level of local services and livelihood and attraction as a good place of living. So, something has to be done... this [Come Home project] is a logical continuum of earlier asylum seekers’ integration efforts that has been implemented there earlier” (FI9C/ Int.7).

“Young people do not stay here because we don’t have any schools for further studies after upper secondary school” (FI9C/ Int.16).

There are also positive factors that may explain why this kind of future oriented practices can happen. One interviewee who follows that community at the provincial level position, described Punkalaidun like this:

“It has been all the time a municipality that is geographically in the center of everything but still far away from everywhere...It has all the time looked kindly on regeneration... Their attitudes to asylum seekers, to entrepreneurship, to renewable energy sources and policy making have been affirmative... It definitely belongs to a group of optimists in bunch of small remote rural municipalities” (FI9C/ Int.21).

Indeed, many interviewees see the location of Punkalaidun as one of the strengths when competing against the depopulation. It is located by the border of four provinces. There are no big cities near that municipality but it is in some kind of center point of four provincial capitals (Tampere, Hämeenlinna, Pori, Turku), about 1-1½ hour drive from each city and two

hour drive to the capital of Finland, Helsinki. A common impression seems to be that those distances are not any hindrances to reach more populated areas of Finland and to choose Punkalaidun as a good and peaceful place of living, especially when distance work has become more common and because they already have invested in fast internet connections to the remote villages too.

“We have about the same distance to Tampere, Turku and Pori. We are by the border of four provinces, so we have changed our message from ‘central location’ to message that we are in the middle of everything” (FI9C/ Int.1).

“We have good connections from here, this is anyway in the geographically center, big cities in every direction and some smaller ones too. I think this place has a good location” (FI9C/Int.11).

“Remote work is increasing...here we have excellent broadband connections by the optical cable from almost every corner of this area...These kind of small municipalities should hold up one's head high and market actively even abroad these places as place of living” FI9C/ Int.12

“I consider this as a very viable municipality because many things are turning to the direction that could have be seen already in 1980's and 1990's (things that we didn't want to see) ...The basic services are in good shape and this is a safe place to live for families with children” (FI9C/ Int.3).

Another positive issue letting good start for the project that many interviewees mentioned, was the strong community spirit and liberality. Perhaps some proof of the liberality is that females have (at the moment of this study) leading positions in many key organizations: chairman of the municipal council, chairman of the local government, municipal manager, manager of administration and finance of municipality, parson of the local Lutheran parish.

There are many associations and NGO-organizations working closely together and in cooperation with municipal administration and enterprises. Also the local Lutheran parish and local newspaper Punkalaitumen Sanomat are important actors of that community. NGOs are active to produce leisure time and culture activities. The local administration has even outsourced some public services supply to local associations.

“It may sound a cliché that one of our big advantages is the community spirit, but this project has shown that it is not a cliché, it is a fact” (FI9C/ Int.6).

"We have had the immigration detention center here for years...and we have warmly welcomed them [asylum seekers] and taken them with us to local actions and they are really good and hard-working people" (FI9C/ Int.8).

"We have a cooperation agreement to 4H and Workers' association to let them to produce some public services: 4H-association to youth and cultural activities from Workers' association" (FI9C/ Int.11).

"I think that one of our strength is...the community spirit. I mean, people in Punkalaidun feel strong regionalism" (FI9C/ Int.12).

"It is just this feeling of spaciousness and peace, persons feel they are noticed, almost everyone knows each other and we have the community spirit" (FI9C/ Int.14).

"... I told you about that sports club. They are the strengths that connect the families with children... and hunting clubs are extremely strong in this area. And there are people who have networks and information channels" (FI9C/ Int.3).

"If you [municipality] want be attractive you must know the whole chain...how to integrate newcomers there. If one's hobby is hunting, you help her/him to enter a hunting club...or think how easily children can enter a football club... In a municipality size of that there cannot be the case that anybody is left out from the community" (FI9C/Int.21).

The cooperation between local actors helped also in planning and getting funding for the Come Home project. Both the municipal administration and local Lutheran parish that were key organization hosting the project are worried about the depopulation and how it affects their operative and financial conditions in the future. Both organizations get their funding basically from tax revenues that are more or less depending on the amount of tax payers.

"I realized that this project might be even more important to the parish than to the municipality. They have bigger concern about the decreasing number of their members" (FI9C/Int.1.)

It is obvious that this innovative experiment of finding new ways to market small rural municipality to possible newcomers could not be realized without external funding and there where a possibility to apply some Leader funding to the project. Perhaps the municipality administration could have been more probable applicant for this kind of project because they had experience of running Leader projects and the context was close to them. Still, they decided that the parish applied the funding and thus took the administrative and

operational liabilities of the project. So, the parish found a new way to get more publicity to get closer to peoples' everyday life. Municipal administration gave their expertise to help with administrative tasks and were also actively engaged in operational tasks.

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Origin of the practice

Punkalaidun has suffered from depopulation for years. Population is getting older and it is hard to create new jobs to the service sector due to decreasing population. There are not very strong absolute or competitive advantage to any industrial production or tourism. Therefore, the number of jobs have not grown either. Despite some possible competitive advantages of agriculture, the technological and structural development have decreased the number of jobs also in that branch. At youth point of view lack of further studying opportunities in Punkalaidun weakens their engagement to a home region in certain a phase of life. How many of them who move out after the studies will return is also an important issue for the settlement. Getting younger families there is an essential point to turn the natural increase of population positive.

There was a common concern about the fact that depopulation has continued for a long time in Punkalaidun and concerns about the ageing population and what kind of negative impacts that has to municipal public economy, to local services and to business life. The problems with depopulation reflected also at the local Lutheran parish because of the decreasing number of parishioners. Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church have the right to levy tax, and they also receive public funding for handling important social tasks. Only the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the members or the Finnish Orthodox Church are obligated to pay the church tax. Under the current tax system, parish councils set tax rates in the same way as municipalities (EVL, 2021).

The negative spiral caused by depopulation is an economic and operational problem for the whole community. Still there is a strong community spirit. Current inhabitants like to live there and they would not be pleased to move out from there unless they have to because of lack of jobs or education opportunities. The native Punkalaidun people believed that also other people might like to live there if they just got to know the place. One of the newcomers who first found a leisure time home from Punkalaidun “by chance” and after some years found a new job as an entrepreneur and moved permanently to Punkalaidun, stated their decision like this:

“I had made my career in Helsinki...then we bought a leisure time home from Punkalaidun and visited both in summer and winter time and spent all our leisure time there... We just

became attached to that place and to people here...they became more and more familiar to us and in a way it was easy... That life in Helsinki region - we had already seen all of it, that's it" (FI9C/ Int.9).

In Punkalaidun there were previous experiences of affecting migration patterns with asylum seekers. Also, the municipality administration had experience of Leader funding due these integration projects. That knowledge encouraged officers from municipality administration and the local Lutheran parish to develop the idea to find new ways also to get positive migration with native people.

"Punkalaidun had visibility even at the EU-level because of their efforts at integration of asylum seekers. That was done in the former EU funding period 2007-2013... There was already an ambition to seek new inhabitants...After these projects, the municipal administration and the parish with Leader action group innovated the idea that why not to integrate native people here too. There are many retired people in Helsinki, Tampere or Turku regions, nicely surrounding Punkalaidun, who think about the return to their roots" (FI9C/Int.7).

"Perhaps the feeling was like crabbing to some straw when trying to increase the visibility and marketing so that people would move back to countryside" (FI19C/Int.1).

"we saw many people who asked if we knew any old houses that are for sale...already before this project we could see some kind of stream to this way" (FI9C/Int.4).

Political incentive

At the same time, from the year 2015 the government of Finland prepared a massive reform to organize Finnish social and health services to a new mode (HE, 2017). The ageing population is also a nationwide challenge and especially to small municipalities. The reform would take the expensive social and health care responsibilities from municipalities to provincial level organizations.

A possible change in social and health care service structures that could decrease the economic risk of inhabit elderly and retired persons in a small municipality. An assumption that there could be many close to retiring age or retired people e.g. around the cities of Helsinki, Turku and Tampere regions who have roots in Punkalaidun region might be possible returnees made the promoters of Come Home project to think that elderly people could be a

good target group to the project. They do not seek a job any more but they ask services which might bring new enterprises, jobs in service sector and working age people too to Punkalaidun. This target group was somewhat surprising but after all it was seen to be logical in that community. There were some critics too though.

The first seeds of the idea for the Come Home project were sowed somewhere between the years 2015 and 2017 by the former municipal manager. Also the local parson and financial manager of the parish were mentioned in that context.

“Perhaps the idea came from innovative persons of Lutheran church, parson and others...financial manager was also in a central role and of course the municipal manager too” (FI9C/Int.7).

“It was the municipal manager got the original idea. It was not that ordinary that pensioners are the population who are wanted to move to municipalities” (FI19C/Int.11).

“Of course there might have been certain critics like why we draw pensioners, younger families are those we should draw. But very soon, I think, they stated that it was still a clever strategy... Traditionally, the municipality would not have drawn pensioners because they were seen costly in social and health costs point of view. After this [social and health services] goes to provincial organization, it will turn around. Pensioners are good tax payers to municipality and after the reform the services they use, mainly health services, are paid by government... The pensioners may become net payers from a municipal economy point of view.” (FI9C/Int.12).

“In the beginning I thought that is there any advantage from this but afterwards I have had information that it has gone surprisingly well” (FI9C/Int.13).

“[Not sure about this strategy]...Perhaps Punkalaidun is searching for the visibility more from their safe, peaceful and open community spirit image... In fact, it is not any vitality politics, it is rather community politics, I think. Of course every newcomer bring some additional resource and jobs in a way or other and make it easier to maintain services” (FI9C/Int.21).

After all, at the first stage of the project from April 2018 to April 2019 the newcomer operations were targeted to elderly people but at a second stage from May 2019 to April 2020 the target group was young families with children.

Actors involved

Operations for the better migration development in Punkalaidun are a wider phenomenon than just one development project in the two-year period. A wider perspective and background to those operations are explained in previous chapters of this report. In a local community there are many kinds of actors who are actively involved in maintaining and developing the livelihood and attractiveness of the home region. In case of Punkalaidun, there is a strong network of actors from public administration, local associations and enterprises.

In Come Home project the key organizations were the local Lutheran parish and the local public administration. It is not possible to forget the significance of community network including the voluntary sector and local enterprises either. Local sport clubs, hunting clubs and several associations, for instance the workers' association that takes care of many cultural activities, 4H association for youth actions, local Martha Organization, Rural Women's Advisory Organisation, village associations, The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL), local Red Cross department, local association of entrepreneurs. There are surprisingly many associations and communities for the municipality of that size. Come Home project perhaps gave them a new arena to shine.

"The Public administration or Parish cannot do that alone, they need all these voluntary actors" (FI9C/Int.12).

The parish had administrative responsibility of the project, hired the project coordinator and looked after the financial issues and other administrative issues. Municipality administration was more involved with actual tasks of the project and supported the work of the project coordinator. Even the office of the project coordinator was in town hall not in rooms of church.

One key person and most important to that project was definitely the project coordinator. In case study interviews her role became very evident. The role of former and present municipal manager and chief editor of local newspaper and Leader actions were mentioned too in interviews.

"[project coordinator] is really an energetic and active person and she got for instance the media collaboration working very well...We got nice reports on the media through this pro-

ject and the point that a rural municipality really can do something to improve one's image, not just resign oneself to the destiny, rather affect it in many ways...

[municipal manager] is also very rich in ideas and she has ability to see and do many things in a different way than other managers...She is for instance keen on environmental aspects and see the significance of it to urban-rural interaction" (F19C/Int.7).

"[project coordinator] is the key person because she has a very yielding way of writing. People were pleased to read those stories" (F19C/Int.1).

"She was good leader for this project, she inspired many people" (F19C/int.14).

"I think the results of this project are mostly thanks to her [project coordinator] efforts" (F19C/Int15).

"She [project coordinator] activated collaboration and visibility almost to every system...brought out local services very well, also to us native inhabitants, services that we did not know to exist here" (F19C/Int.20).

"Editor in chief was one of the best collaboration partners because through him we got so much publicity" (F19C/Int.5).

"Editor in chief has networked quit well, so if something is unclear that I don't know what's going on, I call him and then it's clear" (F19C/Int.10).

"The Leader group Joutsenten reitti has been a very strong actor here for years...[the manager of Leader group] has done really good work on this region, also in Punkalaidun" (F19C/Int.5).

In a small and really tight community network with a low hierarchy it is easier for the key persons to operate. Especially if they get support from voluntary actors. It is also a matter of collaboration traditions and trust and respect between actors.

Style of activities promoted

The Punkalaidun community had experience of integrating asylum seekers there and through these projects to positively affect migration patterns. Despite very challenging population forecasts they have not given up to try to turn the migration and natural increase more positive. Previous chapters of this report explained the background of recently implemented actions to affect the population structure, e.g. why they first choose the strategy of calling back the elderly and retired persons and later younger families.

The Come Home project was implemented in two periods from April 2018 to April 2019 and from May 2019 to April 2020. The strategy of that project was just to make the Punkalaidun and its special features better known to attract possible newcomers. Two of the basic ideas for that project were giving outside positive message and to do it together with the whole community with high self-confidence and pride. That may look simple, but it is not that common among the small regressive rural municipalities. The fact is that a small rural municipality and its possible attractive features as a good place of living remain unknown if nobody tells it loudly and makes it apparent.

"I believe that almost every municipality in Finland would need a project where it is possible to make the place more famous for positive message and thus also collect newcomers to move in" (FI9C/Int.5.).

Resources

The actual financial resources were not that big. The administrator of the project, Punkalaidun Lutheran Parish applied funding from the local Leader action group. Total funding was 120,100 € for the two-year project period (EU 42 %, State of Finland 13 %, Municipal by Leader 20 %, Municipal direct funding 12.5 %, Church 12.5 %).

The justification for funding by Leader group was that the project had a new kind of approach to promote migration to returnees and to rural areas and rural development funding to the local Lutheran parish is reasonable because these project operations are not the normal day-to-day or legally based tasks of the parish (ELY Pirkanmaa, 2019). With that funding, they could hire one full-time project coordinator, cover administration expenses of

administrative organization and actual fieldwork of the project including promotion materials.

One of the first tasks of the project were to explore potential newcomers, in the first phase elderly people who had roots in Punkalaidun, and inform them as personally as possible about the good factors why it pays to move back “home”. To build that network, the project staff contacted for instance people who had recently moved there. Mass media, project website, blogs, social media and many kinds of events were channels to spread the Come Home to Punkalaidun message. Also new promotion material for Punkalaidun was designed and delivered in various events not only in Punkalaidun but also further away.

Beforehand the assumption was that different kinds of events and meeting people could be the most important ways to give information and call people to Punkalaidun. After all, the social media was seen to be the most effective channel.

“Facebook was number one. In the second phase of the project Instagram came alongside. The project coordinator also actively offered articles to magazines and newspapers but print media was not that good even if we got through some good articles. Still, it is the e-media and website but especially Facebook that spreads the information” (FI9C/Int.11).

Right in the beginning the project staff realized that it is important to commit the whole community to that promotion work and to encourage people to tell about their daily life there. In the beginning, the public organizations, municipality administration and local parish organization became involved but also the rich number of local associations and enterprises were a part of a communication network. The project coordinator stated in local newspaper in April 2018:

“We try to raise good reasons to move back here and tell how much we have to offer ... The cooperation between municipal administration and the local parish is important but also cooperation with associations and with all inhabitants. I hope every one of us could carry this project forward. Everyone can think about why we want to live in Punkalaidun...We have 60–70 active associations here. What could be a better way to get to know people and place than participate in different kinds of activities” (Punkalaitumen Sanomat, 2018)

The project coordinator who came to Punkalaidun from other part of Finland had a professional background in marketing and communication. She actively wrote stories about local entrepreneurs and ordinary persons of Punkalaidun. Through those stories, she made the

Punkalaidun features, services, way of living and people better known both locally and outside the municipality. That strategy also committed local residents and entrepreneurs to market their home region and enterprises but also helped local residents to notice many good things in their home area. The communication by the positive aspect were seen good.

"I think that Come project was very innovative. She [project coordinator] brought out very nicely to our awareness smaller and bigger positive aspects of Punkalaidun. In a way, she opened eyes for many people to see such good things that they otherwise would not have seen...and she could make interesting stories about the persons I haven't noticed to exist...interesting persons... It just that it never militates against anything when bringing out positive things" (F19C/Int.2).

Environmental aspects

In the Come Home project the environmental issues as such were not in the main focus. The interviewees were willing to discuss more general about environmental aspects of Punkalaidun. The positive aspects were told mainly through stories of peoples' daily life or by reporting about some events happening there. Environmental aspects were not that much in the center of those stories. Surrounding nature is seen there as a natural thing without any bigger environmental problems. In all, this rural place was seen as a healthy place to live, both at physical and mental point of view.

"Here, like everywhere the environment is the issue that we talk about, in one way or another and we take care of the environment. But I do not know what it means to these native people or if they appreciate it. But for myself who comes here from the capital region...I think the environment is ideal here" (F19C/Int.9).

"We really have that clean environment as a theme and I think that we do not have any problem with environment" (F19C/Int.11).

"it is just this environment as a place of living that has been a great thing, this space and peace, people are listened to and almost everyone knows each other and we have this community spirit...I think the environment and nature is near to us" (F19C/Int.14).

"there is room here to breathe and everyone has their own space" (F19C/Int.4).

Nearby waters have suffered from loadings to some extent. Seven interviewees mentioned about them but they also mentioned about the ongoing projects and CAP-regulations as a means of improve water quality. These projects were not part of the Come Home project.

"The tops of the river Kokemäenjoki stream from here and Loimaa and now we are together starting to fix them. It will be done with the community of local farmers" (F19C/Int.3).

"here we use all the tools that EU-directives ask us to do to take these environmental issues into consideration" (F19C/Int.6).

"Recently we have paid much attention to water conservation...In Punkalaidun, we are piloting the project for new water conservation solutions built together and participatory with local farmers" (F19C/Int.7).

Agricultural landscape and interaction between farming, forestry and nature is more like a thing that has always been there. Concerning the questions of environmental aspects in interviews about 4/5 of the interviewees mentioned rural landscape either as a strength of the region or as a target that has been under development operations or otherwise mentioned in a favorable way. About half of the interviewees saw that the Come Home project somehow brought out the same message but more as a positive image issue.

"When I'm thinking the [project] communication... all pictures tell about the beautiful environment and beautiful landscape" (F19C/Int.4).

"Of course that beautiful natural surrounding was emphasized, like do every municipality, but it does not especially stick out or stick in one's mind" (F19C/Int.18).

Climate issues were brought out mainly by energy production matters and by municipal climate commitment. The Come Home project had no real role in these issues, only telling about these issues in social media and print media articles. On the other hand, the increased publicity and new channels to tell outside also from these issues perhaps gave positive feedback to local actors about their concrete efforts of competing against climate change. The transfer from fossil fuel to bioenergy was seen positive also for the landscape and local scenery.

"Punkalaidun is a HINKU [a commitment to cut the carbon emissions] municipality, been already about a year" (F19C/Int.22).

"This region has been neat since we had this wood-chip-biomass-fired power plant. Now these cutters drive at the edges of the fields and take the willow brushwood away." (FI9C/Int.1).

"it is too easily forgotten that we have strongly transferred from fossil fuels to wood-based bioenergy here" (FI9C/Int.3).

"The project group has discussed that here in rural area we have plenty of room to install solar panels and decrease the bill from electricity " (FI9C/Int .7).

"We try to reach the carbon neutrality. We have district heating and we develop it further but those efforts have begun after the project if I remember it right." (FI9C/Int.10).

Biodiversity issues were not familiar to interviewees, though, or that aspect was not seen problematic in Punkalaidun. That point was raised as a question to interviewees but still hardly anybody could say anything about it.

"I can't remember if anybody has mentioned about it. Everybody, also those who have moved here, tell more about the clean nature... and about safety and peace" (FI9C/Int.5).

"I like that we have diversity in our nature here, no problems in that sense, not that critical." (FI9C/Int.6).

The connection of agriculture and biodiversity was not mentioned either in this context. The attitude towards farming development seems to be almost submissive, like waiting more after political decisions than looking proactively for changes in consumer behavior possibilities, for instance in niche food markets. Every interviewee who told something about the structural development of agriculture estimated that farms continue getting bigger and there is no change in a visible future towards smaller-scale farming or agroecological farming. The food system does not yet give enough incentives to increase organic farming either.

"The profitability of farming has gone to that situation that farms must be very big to get a living to family or alternatively you have to specialize strongly in something. Traditional farming is disappearing" (FI9C/Int.8).

"Agriculture may develop towards bigger farms. Then the small farms will be sold and the big ones buy them" (FI9C/Int.15).

"If organic farming gets more subsidies then it might increase, if less, then it will decrease" (FI9C/Int.17).

Innovativeness and replicability

A majority of interviewees saw the Come Home project having innovativeness. First, the administrative arrangement, collaboration of municipal administration and the local parish and involving parish to work together with local people by Leader project were seen a fresh idea. Also, the active marketing of Punkalaidun by positive stories and in rich variety of media was seen innovative. Involving the whole community in that work increased local self-esteem and knowledge about one's own living area and activated collaboration between various actors inside the community. Some of the interviewees saw that only as a normal marketing process though not that innovative.

Perhaps a choice to select retired persons as a target group of possible newcomers was daring and somewhat innovative, but also somewhat questionable. There wasn't though any bigger conflicts about that choice or about any other aspect of that project. One of the interviewees mentioned something about the jealousy of some actor's big publicity.

"I think the first innovative point was to have an understanding that we can 'sell' the home region to former residents. You can not necessarily see the good things that we have here. You have to be outside the shell to see the strengths" (FI9C/Int.2).

"It would be nice to think that there was some innovativeness but no, it was just marketing... In this case there was a deviant target group... and it attracted some attention" (FI9C/Int.12).

"There was some jealousy to be seen...Some people might have got annoyed about some others getting that much publicity...Perhaps there was not inside discussion in the beginning about the point of the project, discussion about our goals to make a feeling of doing together and a feeling of shared thing" (FI9C/Int.6).

"If I compare this project with some other projects here that are targeted to youth, so the [Come Home project] could have been more youthful too. But on the other hand, if we are trying to get elderly people to move to live here so..." (FI9C/Int.22).

Practice like Come Home project is quite easy to replicate, no interviewees questioned about that. Interviewees pointed out the crucial point of project leader for the successful practice. It is remarkable, too, that this kind practice work better in smaller and tightly networked communities like Punkalaidun.

"The main thing is to recruit a suitable person to run it. If we asked from leading persons of Finnish rural municipalities and parishes if this kind of project could be good also in your community, everyone would say yes. Replicability is not a problem" (FI9C/Int.6).

DRAFT

The report is subject to possible changes due to approval process by the European Commission.

Synergies and networking

Depopulation is a challenge to many remote rural municipalities, also to neighboring ones of Punkalaidun. Rural municipalities are rather competing for possible newcomers than collaborating over the municipality borders to get more positive population development in that region. Administrative borders hinder collaboration to some extent. In many cases, native inhabitants have strong emotional ties to one's own municipality. Consolidations of municipalities are not easy. It is understandable. There is always a risk of losing authority and services in some part of new area if politics does not work.

Decreasing population reduces tax revenues and thus possibilities to maintain or develop public services. Sometimes consolidation is inevitable. Municipalities make bilateral or multi-lateral deals for common service production to find better cost-effectiveness and resources to investments, but still keep one's own local administration and some services like schools. So has done Punkalaidun too. The community has a strong identity and a desire to keep some independence.

Therefore, the Punkalaidun community makes the migration efforts for itself. Neighboring municipalities make their own. Although Punkalaidun does not seem to have any problems in collaboration with its neighbors, the collaboration between municipalities in migration efforts seem to be tiny. On the other hand collaboration and networks inside the municipality borders are tight and likely they have become even tighter by the Come Home project.

One interesting form of collaboration is the one between municipal administration and the local Lutheran parish. The Lutheran church has a strong position and structures in rural municipalities but perhaps it has been an underutilized resource in rural development. In Punkalaidun, they have had ability to involve the parish closer to local development by the Come Home project.

"two years ago when the parish started these [project] tasks, it was something very new. I mean that the parish has been more or less a hidden actor. An actor that has not made itself too visible or marketed itself. I think that this is one of the reasons why this project got that big publicity" (F19C/Int.1).

Local Lutheran parish is one part of state church in Finland. The Come Home project got publicity also due to that network. The Bishop of Turku Archbishopric also awarded the project by Arkipöytä award (Turku Archbishopric, 2019).

One very important actor for building synergies and collaboration is probably the local newspaper Punkalaitumen Sanomat. It has been published since 1909. It is still locally owned and its circulation has been all the time only in Punkalaidun and in former inhabitants of Punkalaidun. At present, the publication has a circulation of about 3,100. More than half of the circulation is outside municipality borders to former inhabitants, students and summer time residents. The local newspaper was an important resource for the Come Home project (Punkalaitumen Sanomat, 2021).

The previous chapters of this report described how local enterprises and voluntary organizations were tied to these municipal marketing efforts. It seemed to happen mainly due to active and participatory work of the project coordinator but the tight local network and community spirit has helped that. Neighboring municipalities were not involved in the project actions. They seemed to be more or less bystanders. Is the community then too cliquish? One external evaluator gives some hints to that question.

"Punkalaidun is independent but not lonely...it is aware of itself but not arrogant or closing its borders. Instead it participates in various common structures. It is a small municipality that has networked in a modern way" (FI9C/Int.21).

Probably the most important external partner was the regional Leader action group. Of course they had an important role when granting the funding for the project but it is notable that other Leader projects in that region had created a good base for these kind actions. Come Home project was part of that rural development network.

Policies and institutional supports

The strongest motivational factor for the Come Home project was no doubt the depopulation of Punkalaidun. Both the municipal administration and the local Lutheran parish had incentives to something to it. Also the local enterprises and inhabitants recognize the problem of population decline and ageing and loss of jobs and services. The municipal administration had also lately made some future-oriented decisions, for instance to build a new school and to build a broadband access to remote villages.

Some motivational factors for starting the project came also outside Punkalaidun. In chapter three of this report there is an explanation of the preparations of Finnish legislative reforms for organizing the social and health service to a new mode. That reform would have made the retired people perhaps more wanted newcomers since the economic risk of inhabiting them in small rural municipalities could become smaller. The awareness of these governmental actions perhaps encouraged the former municipal manager to give an idea of the project like Come Home. Another external factor to boost the project idea was the availability of Leader funding.

The Come Home project tasks for balancing the migration had a strong institutional support by the local public actors. A local Lutheran parish was a responsible administrator of the project and employed the project coordinator. The municipal administration was closely involved in the operative tasks of the project and supported the project coordinator in her work. In fact the project coordinator's office was in town hall.

For the Come Home project itself the interviewees did not see any political or other constraints. The questions of the basic problem, the depopulation of rural areas and how to affect it possibly by legislative or other public operations, turned out to be quite difficult for the interviewees. Still, the interviews brought some viewpoints to take into account to these matters.

The administrative actors had know-how for running the Leader projects and the expertise of the Leader group that was available before and during the project was appreciated. Still, the bureaucracy concerning EU-funding and subsidies, distance between provincial administration and the local actors and the top-down type administration model got some general comments. Also the effectiveness of project based development actions was challenged.

"I think it [Leader group] has worked well. They have strong expertise that supports these goals. One thing that is bothering me is that often in these kind of projects, the idea and goals are very good but many times they are alive just the time when that project is running. They rarely have any permanent effects" (FI9C/Int.6).

"Those tables of ELY [Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment] to fill, have lots of features that take unnecessarily time from the real work with people... I appreciate those officers but still, they could meet more face-to-face the personnel of various projects... If they are hanging just by the phone and computer, covered by their forms and simultaneously the project personnel work in a very other kind of a world, they never really meet each other" (FI9C/Int.5).

There were some more detailed critical opinions concerning the drivers and impacts of agricultural and forest policy which have an impact also to rural regeneration. The interviewees saw that current CAP-policy does not give enough incentives to rural regeneration.

"I have gone through the pain of agricultural EU-directives and their connection to actual farming works. How can it be so senseless that if you check the cross by accident in a wrong box, you alone are responsible for that? As an entrepreneur [in other field of business] I can somehow fix my mistakes but in agricultural [bureaucracy] matters you never have chance to do it" (FI9C/Int.3).

"Some part of the agricultural land remain in productive use, some part not, they move to land only for environmental purposes. They are not in active use, they just grow something and then, under the EU-regulations, the growth is cut down. We have lots of these kind of fields that are just circulated and cut down" (FI9C/Int.17).

"We talk about the storing the carbon in forests. In Britain, they talk about storing it in fields. We need various solutions [in environmental policy]... I think Punkalaidun could be an interesting base for those kinds of ideas" (FI9C/Int.21).

"we had this early retirement aid for farm entrepreneurs [until 2018]. Is there some correlation for it in this figure? [the interviewee means the difficulties to find successors and new entrants to farming]" (FI9C/Int.3).

The taxation system, building regulations and investments in infrastructure were some of the issues that were seen to affect migration and rural regeneration. Current policy practices were seen to favor centralized settlement.

“We had that settlement model of two home municipalities in Finland but that, like all innovative experiments fall down when some fundamental law expert says that it is against the equality of people...In Sweden and Norway, they have been able to build those kinds of models” (FI9C/Int.7).

“Primary production dominates [economy] in Punkalaidun, producing raw materials to food and forest industry. Still, the headquarters of those companies are in Tampere, Turku, Helsinki and there they pay the corporate tax...How could we get a fairer system to that because the roots for the production chain start from rural areas and they use the roads and services here? So, shouldn't some part of that corporate tax return back here?” (FI9C/Int.7).

“We have to pay the real estate tax here too, even if we don't have those services, street lights and streets” (FI9C/Int.8).

“Unfortunately the actions of state authorities favor those people who live in cities...People are driven to move to close each other” (FI9C/Int.11).

“It is very difficult to change the leisure time home as a permanent home [for regulative reasons]. Building in rural areas is very difficult in many municipalities” (FI9C/Int.18).

One aspect was the attitude towards rural areas in media and at national level administration.

“The cities build themselves the urban decay. I hope that people won't become socially excluded. When people are incited to move to cities arguing that life is better there, we are in the minority against that communication” (FI9C/Int.1).

“The state of Finland could start a national Come Home campaign. Hundreds of thousands of people have moved to the USA, Sweden and Australia and everywhere in the world...We could be a haven, a safe place for those families who have children and are thinking about the schools for their children. We have great results in PISA surveys and a safety environment” (FI9C/Int.12).

These regulative, legislative and structural issues are complicated questions since the interviewees perhaps had not prepared themselves to answer these matters. It was easier for them to discuss the local matters which are closer to their everyday life. The more detailed remarks and development ideas could be more reachable in workshops and stakeholder meeting where the participants would be better prepared for these challenging matters before the discussion.

Impact and perspectives

The Come Home project was brought to Punkalaidun as one new tool for controlling the depopulation there or even turn the population development positive in the future. The regressive development of both natural increase and intermunicipal migration have continued for years. They of course knew that this project could not turn the migration or natural increase suddenly positive.

They have had some development projects there before and the municipal administration has do its best to maintain good public services there. Residents of Punkalaidun seem to be proud and happy of their home region. They enjoy the good sides of the rural life. They enjoy the peaceful landscape and nature. We can see solidarity among people and strong community spirit. The big voluntary sector with dozens of associations and collaboration between them and with the public sector, tells about the activity and liveliness of that community. It also tells about the good democratic control and participatory decision making. The voluntary sector also produces some of the public culture services by the agreement with municipal administration.

The equality of genders is not a problem. The interviewees were mainly surprised when they were asked about it. Females occupy all the leading positions both in municipal and parish administration. The Come Home project also brought out the female entrepreneurs and other female residents in its communication. But not by any certain purpose, assured the project coordinator. She had not paid any special attention to it. It just is like it is. One problem with the gender issue is that the number of young and working age females is decreasing faster than the number of males.

One proof of the community's openness and liberalism is the way they have responded to asylum seekers and to other foreigners. Their integration to that municipal community seems to be successful. Recent years the international migration has been the balancing factor for the population development of Punkalaidun. Without it, the depopulation would have been much stronger.

Still, the fact is, though, that there are also natural reasons for the depopulation and ageing. Like one of the interviewees told, Punkalaidun is in the center of everything but still far away from everywhere. It is in the intersection of four provinces, not very far from the biggest

cities in Finland but not in actual commuting area of them either. The youth has no possibilities to study there further after upper secondary school and therefore many young people move away right after they become adults. Because of the structure of economic life there are not enough jobs either to keep them there. There are many enterprises but typically each of them can employ only one or two people.

The agricultural structure has developed in a same way as in other parts of Finland. Farms are getting bigger and the number of farmers and agricultural jobs are decreasing. Technological development makes it possible to replace the human work with machinery and automation. Many of the farms can employ only part-time since the decline of animal husbandry. In Punkalaidun there are still some very strong farm enterprises that have invested much for the future. Their ability to employ is still very limited. The structural change of agriculture affects heavily to municipality like Punkalaidun which has been and still is so dependent on a primary sector. It is worth mentioning that in Punkalaidun the primary sector is involved strongly in local energy system transition from fossil fuel to local bioenergy and taking its local role to control the global climate change.

Based on case study interviews and statistics there are no signs of massive transfers to organic farming, agro-ecological ecosystems or other alternative food producing and delivery systems. Some interviewees mentioned the possibilities of transition towards more local and more transparent food system and thus better market incentives for local products. Even though they have some local food industry actors in Punkalaidun, the possible transition that could change the local agriculture and agricultural jobs were not strongly visible in the near future. The general picture of agriculture is based on current political control of CAP and the current centralized food system. In that sense, Punkalaidun does not jump out from some other area in Finland. The Come Home project did not concentrate to primary sector transitions and therefore it is impossible to judge its success in that point of view. Anyway, the current development in agriculture does not increase future jobs or settlement in Punkalaidun.

The persons interviewed could not raise any crucial ideas to have new bigger enterprises or jobs there. One sector that was mentioned having the possibilities to improve the employment situation was the health and social sector if they can have returnees or other elderly to move there. More residents mean more demand for local services and again more jobs. In

that sense, also the strategy of the first phase of the Come Home project was approved there.

For the working age newcomers' settlement increasing remote work and residential multi-locality were seen to affect positively also in Punkalaidun. The publicity and positive communication that the Come Home project made for Punkalaidun and its services made this small rural municipality more visible and helped probably to reach that target group too. The COVID-19 pandemic increased, temporarily or permanently, the interest of rural areas as living or working space. The Come Home project was running only a short time during the pandemic but it is possible that for some "pandemic refugees" it was easier to notice Punkalaidun as escape room than without the project publicity. Many of them perhaps already had a leisure time or second home but some of these newcomers may have found a new nest from there.

The project started in April 2018. In the calendar years in 2018 and 2019, the net migration of Punkalaidun was still negative. Although statistics do not yet show any encouraging evidence for turning the depopulation to remigration, it is still too early to judge the efforts that have been done in Punkalaidun during 2018-2020 whether they have been a success or a failure.

The actions made recent years have nevertheless made Punkalaidun and its attractive features better known among possible newcomers. Also the current residents are better aware of local services, enterprises, voluntary organizations and people and of their home surroundings in all. The collaboration between the local actors of that community improved, no doubt. Probably the positive community spirit has strengthened due to positive communication and publicity. Since changes in migration pattern can be observed as a long-term phenomenon, it is difficult to evaluate the final success of the two-year project like Come Home through its fundamental goals. It can more or less open new ways to later possible positive migration and regeneration.

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ANNEX 1. The list of interviews

Code	Interviewee (Pseudonym)	Gender	Role	Place and date of the interview	Other information
F19C/Int.1	To	Female	c,f	Punkalaidun 1.10.2020	
F19C/Int.2	Ou	Female	d,f	Punkalaidun 1.10. 2020	
F19C/Int.3	Sa	Male	d	Punkalaidun 2.10. 2020	
F19C/Int.4	Sa2	Female	d	Punkalaidun 2.10. 2020	
F19C/Int.5	Ka	Female	b ,c, e	Punkalaidun 2.10. 2020	
F19C/Int.6	Ja	Male	e	Punkalaidun 2.10. 2020	
F19C/Int.7	Ri	Male	e	Teams 5.10.2020	
F19C/Int.8	Ka2	Male	e	Phone 13.10.2020	
F19C/Int.9	Ha	Male	a,d	Phone 9.10.2020	
F19C/Int.10	La	Female	f	Teams&Phone 14.10.2020	
F19C/Int.11	Mo	Female	c,e	Teams 15.10.2020	
F19C/Int.12	Mo2	Male	e	Teams 16.10.2020	
F19C/Int.13	Oi	Male	e	Phone 20.10.2020	
F19C/Int.14	Ra	Female	d	Phone 21.10.2020	
F19C/Int.15	Va	Female	d,e	Phone 26.10.2020	
F19C/Int.16	Vu	Female	d,e	Phone 26.10.2020	
F19C/Int.17	Yl	Male	a,d	Teams 27.10.2020	
F19C/Int.18	Ha2	Male	e	Phone 17.11.2020	
F19C/Int.19	Ra	Male	d,e	Phone 17.11.2020	
F19C/Int.20	Ni	Female	d,e	Phone 3.12.2020	
F19C/Int.21	Ha3	Male	f	Teams 9.12.2020	
F19C/Int.22	Vi	Female	e,f	Teams 5.1.2021	

Role of the respondents:

- a rural newcomers, new entrants or successors;
- b promoters and actors involved in promising practices
- c key informants on promising practices;
- d Local entrepreneurs (especially in the main important sectors operating in the context analysed)
- e Key persons in local communities, social networks or social movements;
- f Local/regional politicians involved in the definition/implementation of policy measure related to rural newcomers, new entrants or successors;
- g Responsible persons of local employers' association, farmers organisation and trade unions