

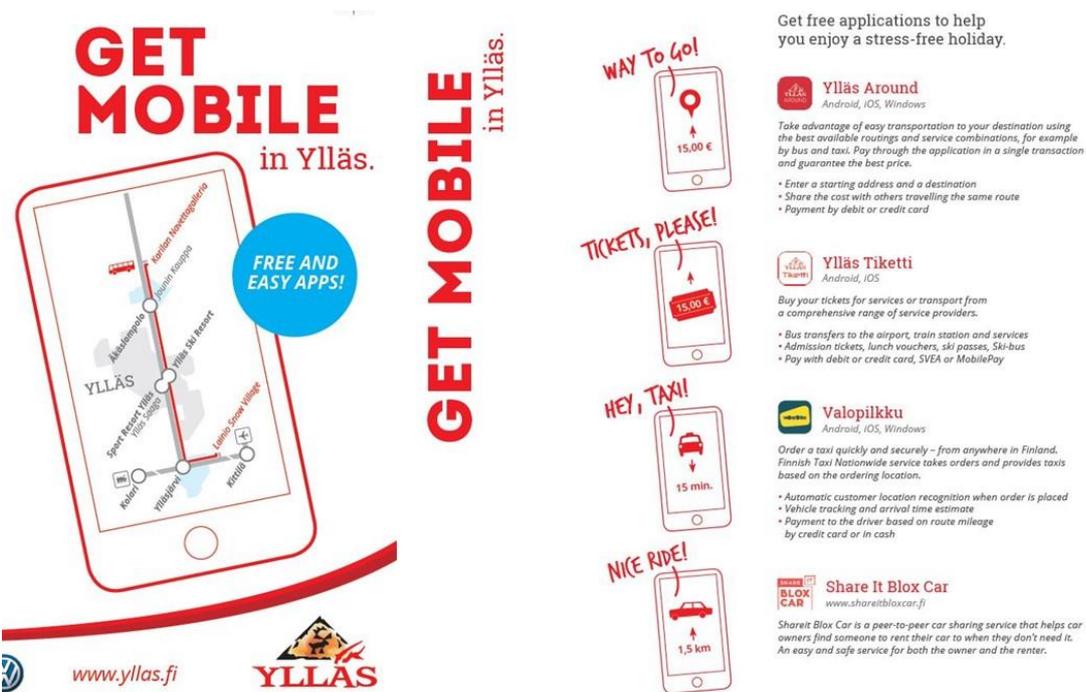
Ylläs Around and YlläsTiketti – piloting Maas, mobility and tourism-related services in rural Finland

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Ylläs is a popular ski resort located in the municipality of Kolari in Lapland Province of Finland. Tourism is an important economic activity in the area. In order to make the area more assessible for visitors and tourists without private cars, a mobility project was initiated in 2016.

In the beginning, a mobile application called Ylläs Around combining information about bus connections and other available mobility options, such as taxis, in Ylläs area was created, tested and launched by a cooperation project formed together by the municipality of Kolari and Ylläs Travel Association. The aim was to offer a simple tool for finding the best available routing and mobility service combinations in the region of Ylläs, and offering payment in a single transaction through an APP. The results with the mobile application were quite promising but some technical as well as practical issues led to a situation where this application was decided to put aside. Instead, together with the Technical Research Centre of Finland and it's Vamos! Project¹, an application called YlläsTiketti that enables to buy tickets for services or transport from a comprehensive range of both public and private service providers was launched in December 2016. For example, a customer can buy tickets in advance for bus transfers to the airport and services admission tickets to events, lunch

Figure 1 Different mobility and tourim services in Ylläs area. Source: Ylläs 2018.



GET MOBILE in Ylläs.

FREE AND EASY APPS!

GET MOBILE in Ylläs.

WAY TO GO!
15,00 €

TICKETS, PLEASE!
15,00 €

HEY, TAXI!
15 min.

NICE RIDE!
1,5 km

Get free applications to help you enjoy a stress-free holiday.

Ylläs Around
Android, iOS, Windows
Take advantage of easy transportation to your destination using the best available routings and service combinations, for example by bus and taxi. Pay through the application in a single transaction and guarantee the best price.
• Enter a starting address and a destination
• Share the cost with others travelling the same route
• Payment by debit or credit card

Ylläs Tiketti
Android, iOS
Buy your tickets for services or transport from a comprehensive range of service providers.
• Bus transfers to the airport, train station and services
• Admission tickets, lunch vouchers, ski passes, Ski-bus
• Pay with debit or credit card, SVEA or MobilePay

Valopilkku
Android, iOS, Windows
Order a taxi quickly and securely – from anywhere in Finland. Finnish Taxi Nationwide service takes orders and provides taxis based on the ordering location.
• Automatic customer location recognition when order is placed
• Vehicle tracking and arrival time estimate
• Payment to the driver based on route mileage by credit card or in cash.

Share It Blox Car
www.shareitbloxcar.fi
ShareIt Blox Car is a peer-to-peer car sharing service that helps car owners find someone to rent their car to when they don't need it. An easy and safe service for both the owner and the renter.

www.yllas.fi

YLLÄS

¹ <https://vamosapi.com/references/>

vouchers, ski passes etc. Tickets for events include for example cultural happenings, such as concerts.

In addition, the original Ylläs Around application has been changed into a web browser based service for searching and finding information about different bus routes.

Development work for improving these services is continuing and a new project with a consortium covering the whole Finnish Lapland is yet to come. The region of Ylläs wants to act as a mentor for other regions in Lapland and elsewhere in Finland in developing and improving mobility services. The overall aim is to create a service covering the entire Lapland and include for example realtime bus information into to the service.

Ylläs Around mobility services includes also a peer-to-peer car-sharing service provided by ShareItCar BloxCar.

Preconditions, inspiration, nurture

The original mobility solution, Ylläs Around mobile application, was developed for the Ylläs area in the municipality of Kolari. Ylläs is a popular cross country and downhill skiing centre. According to the study conducted in 2015 by the University of Eastern Finland, the respondents evaluated the accessibility of Ylläs region to be weak. Only 24 % of the respondents found the accessibility of the region as adequate and 13 % of the respondents regarded the internal mobility connections in the region as adequate. According to the study, these evaluations have a negative impact on the amount of tourists visiting the centre.

Ylläs region has belonged to the project area of Finnish Transport Agency's Aurora project² which "is a public test ecosystem created to ensure intelligent and automated transport as well as solutions for road maintenance and asset management to meet the requirements of all conditions." MaaS (Mobility as a Service) is a sub-project in the larger Aurora project. As a consequence, the Ylläs region got funding from the Finnish Transport Agency to develop MaaS as a local mobility solution in order to improve the accessibility and internal mobility of the region.

In the beginning of the project, there was a need for discussions and interaction with the local entrepreneurs in order to make them feel that the new service will be beneficial for them as well as their customers.

No comprehensive assessment of mobility needs and patterns among the inhabitants in the region was performed, but as the Ylläs region is a popular skiing centre where people travel by car, airplane, train or bus and the most relevant mobility patterns are similar among the tourists (for example from the hotel to different tourist attractions etc.) this helped to evaluate the mobility needs and patterns.

² <https://www.liikennevirasto.fi/web/en/e8-aurora#.WylfkiFPIV>

Implementation

Resources:

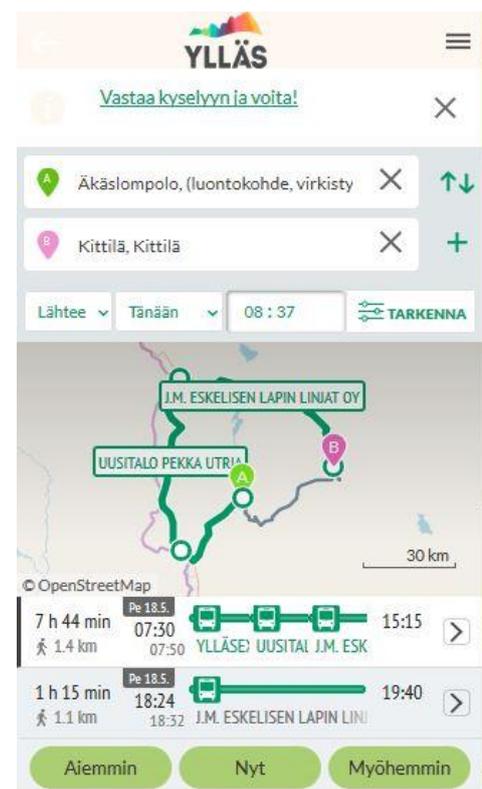
During the different phases of the project, Ylläs Travel Association has had the key role in administrating and monitoring the services. Various co-operation partners, including the municipality of Kolari, Finnish Transport Agency, Regional Business Development centre as well as local transportation service providers have been part of the project offering for example expertise or funding.

The initiatives have been developed mainly with the funding from the Finnish Transport Agency. It is not yet self-sufficient.

In addition to the tourists and other customers, the entrepreneurs and mobility service providers are key stakeholders in the region. The entrepreneurs and service providers have been informed about the new applications and solutions developed in the project, and their benefits for themselves and their customers, so that they can recommend the services to their customers.

During the next phase of the project, 1 full-time coordinator for mobility services will be recruited to the Ylläs Travel Association.

Figure 2 Ylläs Around widget. Source: Ylläs 2018.



Enablers and Barriers

A remarkable bottleneck for the project has been marketing. As Ylläs region receives new tourists every week, there are new customers each week who need to be informed about the services. To be able to cover a wide audience, the marketing activities should be ambitious, such as animated videos. However, these kinds of activities are often expensive. One major challenge is also to inform the customers about the mobility services well in advance so that people know about the existing options and possibilities already when they plan their trips.

A clear bottleneck with Ylläs Around application were the technical weaknesses faced during the implementation. The aim was to offer taxi trips in a principle where the price would go down when the amount of travelers would increase. The system didn't count the price right, which lead to situation where taxi drivers didn't want to drive those trips.

Another challenge in creating a comprehensive service that provides information about bus and transportation routes is the administration and supplement of the information in the system. Small mobility service providers are often not used to working with different systems and softwares, which

in the case of Ylläs meant that the updating of the information was the responsibility of Ylläs Travel Association, which was a big workload.

When it comes to the sociocultural aspects, many travelers staying in Ylläs region are middle-aged people, who often are not so used to utilizing different mobile applications. Most of the visitors in Ylläs stay for a short period of time, and uploading an app just for this period may not always be so attractive for them. Therefore, how to reach all the tourists and customers coming to the region every week, and how to encourage them to install and use an app have been among the most important questions for the developers.

In working with visitors, who are a mobile and constantly changing target group, frequent media campaigns, communication and marketing efforts have been among the key enablers. In addition, support from the local entrepreneurs, utilization of existing softwares and systems, as well as having good co-operation partners were deemed important.

Legal issues have not been relevant in the case of Ylläs skiing centre and their mobility projects.

The outcomes, effects and further development

Among the outcomes of the project are:

- further development of the existing mobility services
- the raise of awareness among tourists and other customers on different mobility options and solutions in the region
- experiences of co-operation with national and local partners in developing mobility solutions
- understanding of key enablers and challenges when developing such initiatives in similar regions.

According to the evaluation of Ylläs Around application (2017), 90 % of the users of the app considered themselves either rather satisfied or very satisfied with the application. 55 % of the users were willing to continue using the app during their next stay in the region.

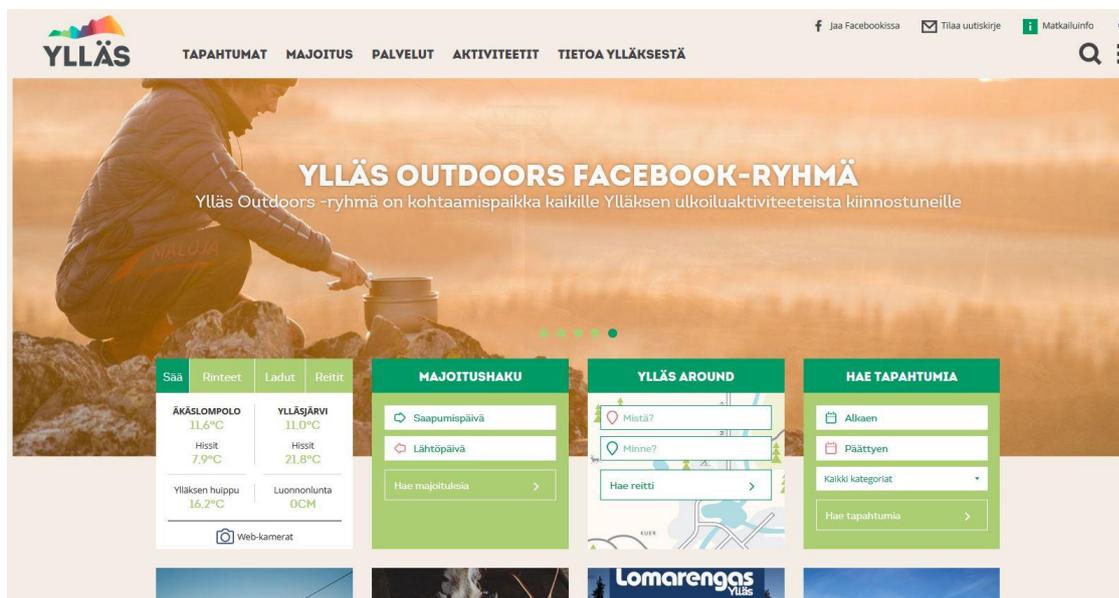
Ylläs Travel Association is currently applying for a large project with many co-operation partners nationally and regionally to upscale the development of the mobility solutions to the whole Finnish Lapland. The objectives for the future are for example to create a platform informing about all the different forms of mobility and make it possible to combine them when planning your trip. It is also hoped that new forms of Transport on Demand as well as MaaS will emerge and already existing transportations could be used in new ways.

Lessons Learned

A clear driver for the development of the mobility solutions in the touristic areas such as Finnish Lapland is the fact that the number of single travelers and self-acting travelers is raising, which makes it more important to offer services for independent decision makers. So far the culture of package tours has been a retardant factor in developing new mobility solutions for touristic sites.

In the Case of Ylläs, people and entrepreneurs were not so familiar for example with the word “MaaS”. The concept was considered to be somewhat unclear and vague. This means that when developing new mobility solutions based on new technologies or concepts, one must take into account the local and regional circumstances as well as stakeholders’ understanding about the initiative. One must not rely too much on trendy words that are familiar only for the experts.

Picture 1 Ylläs website combining different search and booking services. Source: Ylläs 2018.



In small communities, often found in rural areas, the uptake of an innovation may rely a lot on the local citizens’ and entrepreneurs’ attitudes and their willingness to recommend the innovation to others. This was the case in Ylläs, too. In Ylläs, a lot of work was done to inform the local entrepreneurs about the new initiatives and their benefits for their business and their customers.

Other lessons learned shared by the Ylläs Travel Association:

- If you want to create a technological solution, do not start from the zero. There are various existing solutions from whom you can learn and which you perhaps can utilize as a part of your project.
- Select your co-operation partners carefully. For example, the technical support and customer service must work well and be available when needed.
- Do not underestimate the power of local people and entrepreneurs. Pay attention and put effort on explaining the initiative to the local community and make the aims and effects of the project clear for them. Do not presume too much about their knowledge or understanding beforehand.
- If the aim of your project is to collect existing schedule information into one place, it is recommendable that the transportation entrepreneurs do the information updating by themselves.

Ylläs Travel Association wants to test new solutions also in the future, act as a mentor for other regions and distribute their knowledge and “lessons learned” for others.

Read more: <http://www.yllas.fi/en/yllas-around>

References

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