

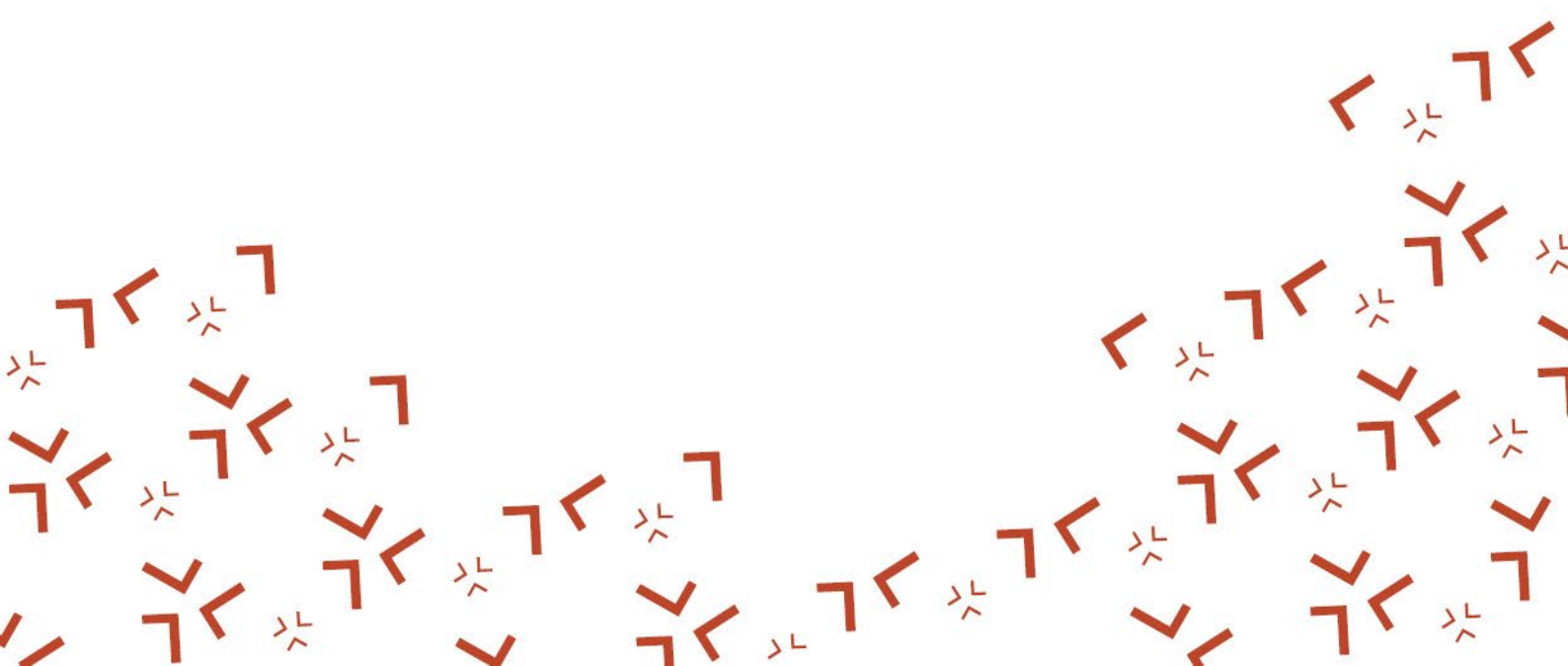
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Käytä viittauksessa alkuperäistä lähdettä:

Tyni, S. & Tuomela-Pyykkönen, M. 2023. Educating sustainable change experts. Pohjoisen tekijät – Lapin AMKin asiantuntijablogi 9.11.2023.

URL: <https://www.lapinamk.fi/blogs/Educating-sustainable-change-experts/0g5cunco/bd54c900-71f9-432b-a892-694275ca2847>



EDUCATING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE EXPERTS

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Authors: Sanna Tyni, Ph.D., Principal lecturer, New Industry Expertise Group, Lapland University of Applied Sciences and Marika Tuomela-Pyykkönen, M.Sc., Head of Degree Programme in Managing Sustainability and Systems Change (MaSS), Masters's School, Lapland University of Applied Sciences



In September 2023, there were many excited UAS Lapland teachers looking forward to meeting the first-ever Master of Managing Sustainability and Systems Change ([MaSS](#)) –students in Rovaniemi (Fig. 1). After carefully designing of new Master's program combining transformative learning with the themes of sustainable development, responsibility and circular economy (Circular Economy Centre, 2023), this was the day we all had waited for. Now, after a couple of months have passed by and MaSS studies are ongoing, we wanted to pull together our thoughts and experiences about the start of the MaSS learning journey.





Figure 1. The very first group of MaSS students and tutors with guests from Ukrainian Catholic University at Lapland UAS campus in Rovaniemi.

Future change agents

The leading thought behind the new program was to answer the need of experts to enhance systematic sustainability and green transition in organisations. This was already in the background of designing the MaSS programme and core courses.

The world is in a situation, where we are going to need different kinds of experts with a deeper understanding of sustainability, responsibility as well as circular economy as a part of their expertise and everyday work in different organisations. The green transition is seeking responses to the sustainability crisis and a transformation of the organisations and work life. In the MaSS programme, we combine these substance themes into transformational learning to provide new tools and perspectives for students to work with.

During the orientation week, after the initial starting day with coordinating all the technical issues, the second day really kicked off our MaSS learning journey and it meant to apply the transformative learning pedagogy. In practice, this face-to-face meeting day with fellow students and tutors provided an excellent foundation to get to know each other and supported the start of the collaboration and creating a true sense of belonging.

At the end of the second day, while relaxing and filling our tummies with pizzas, the looks on our faces told it all – we were all in the right place (Fig. 2). And as many of our students commented; it felt like finally coming home. We cannot phrase it nicer – what a sense of community was established already during our very first days! And the sense of hope that was brought upon us, this is exactly what we needed in this day and age.



Figure 2. Pizza time! (Image: Marika Tuomela-Pyykkönen, 2023)

At the core of the studies

The core and profiling studies of the MaSS program (Fig 3.) are designed to support the growth of expertise from the different perspectives of sustainable development, corporate responsibility as well as circular economy. This expertise is integrated into the master's thesis process. (Joutsenvirta et al. 2022; Tuomela-Pyykkönen & Tyni, 2023) With the MaSS tutor team's support, students are practising transformative development from the very beginning of the studies to graduation and beyond as a part of the Practising Transformative Development course. The course will continue until the end of the spring semester.

Individual and group work will provide support to other courses so that students can strengthen their mind settings, values, and expertise within the different contexts. The feedback from the students is mainly given as comments during the group meetings. Overall, it has been positive feedback and they have been very inspired and open-minded towards the new way to study. A deeper evaluation of the course will be done after the fall semester and at the end of the first year.

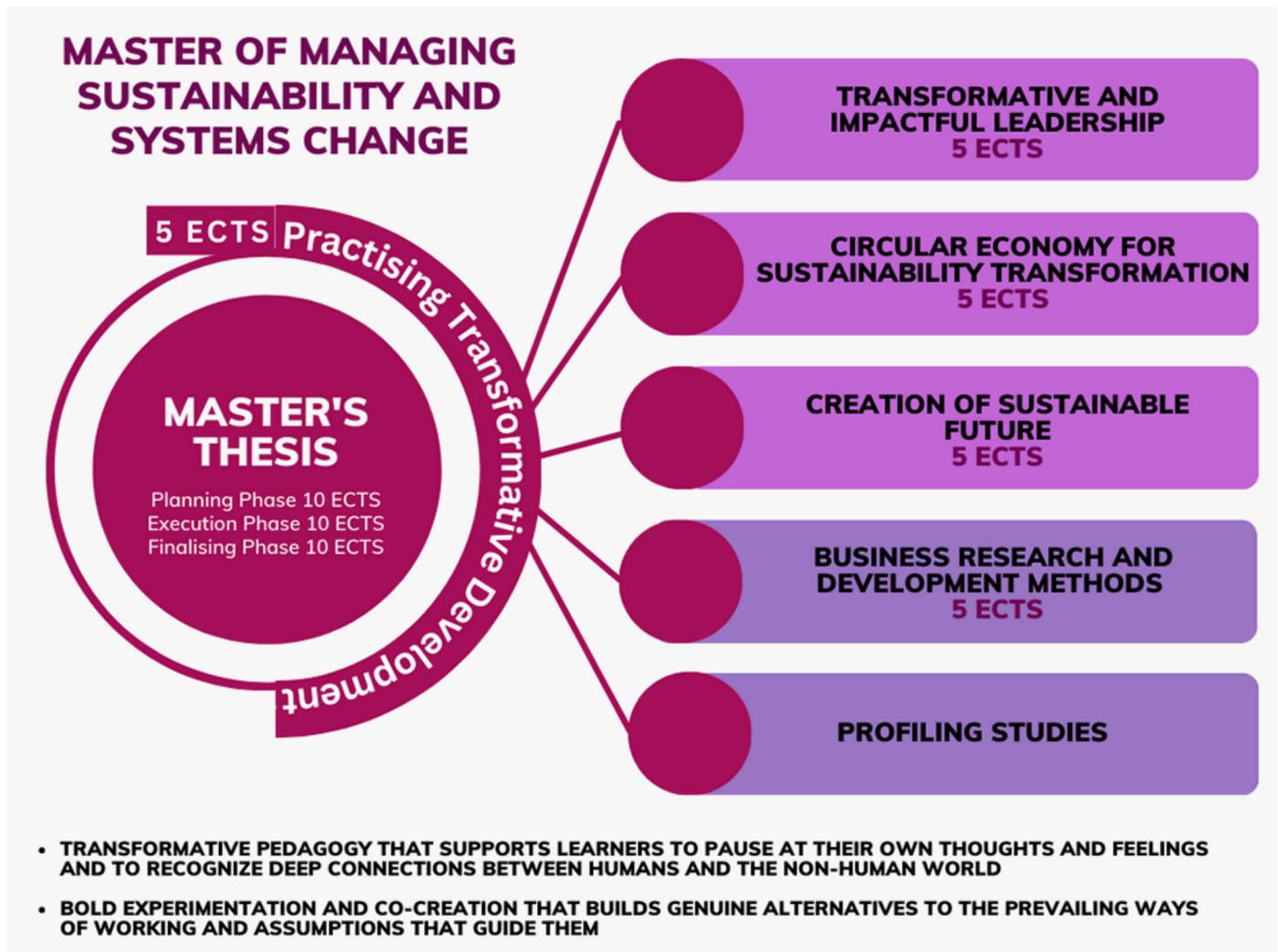


Figure 3. MaSS degree structure

Alongside the core studies, the students have an opportunity to select 5-35 ECTS for their profiling studies, to support developing their expertise. As another pilot, in Spring 2024, MaSS students will have an opportunity to choose a new profiling study course Solutions. now. This course is arranged in collaboration with Tampere UAS, Turku UAS and LAB UAS offering a great opportunity to network with fellow students from these organising universities.

Solutions.now is a project-based course, where a group of students will work with the real-life problems provided by different organisations. This course is part of the Climate University network collaboration, in which Lapland UAS has been a member since 2022. This network consists of Finnish higher education institutions and other stakeholders interested in developing sustainability and climate-related higher education. More information about the course is available in the Lapland UAS Study Guide. Lapland UAS will provide the project case but let's keep it a secret until the start of the course.

What next?

The first class of the MaSS degree program was launched and tutors have already received feedback from the first courses. One of the positive feedbacks concerned the utilisation of flipped classroom, where materials are given in forehand before group meetings. The actual meetings focus on discussions and sharing the expertise between students and tutors, which provides opportunities to share different perspectives of "wicked issues" in different kinds of contexts.

However, the students thought that some of the discussions at the beginning of meetings should be shorter. We should have more time to go deeper into each meeting's main themes. Additionally, students have given us

feedback about the amounts of tasks during the first months of studies. This kind of feedback is quite usual in other programmes. Master's studies involve 60 to 90 ECTS amount of studies, and 30 ECTS come from the thesis. 60 ECTS is the number of studies, full-time students will make during a one year (fall and spring semester).

Most of the students in the master's programme are working during their studies, which means a quite heavy weekly programme to deal with. In the MaSS programme, courses have been designed so that individual and group tasks would make it a little bit easier to try to combine school work with other parts of life. Tutors are still very aware of the workload students are going through and trying to seek new ways to help students to combine these different elements together.

This kind of feedback is most appreciated, especially since the courses are new. Feedback during the semester also helps to make some smaller adjustments to other courses still ongoing and redesign the concepts for the next semester. At the moment, the first MaSS group have initiated the most interesting state-of-art thesis topics related to sustainability theme and will start their contributions to the global sustainability field.

The MaSS mentors are quite excited to see the development process of the first MaSS group. We are also eager to start designing the next versions of courses for MaSS Master students for Fall 2024 on account of this experience already gained during this semester.

More information:

Circular Economy Centre (2023) Now is the time for changemakers – new master's program starting in Lapland UAS, News – Circular Economy Centre, 5.9.2023, <https://www.digipolis.fi/en/news/now-is-the-time-for-changemakers-new-masters-program-starting-in-lapland-uas>.

Joutsenvirta, M., Laininen, E., Tyni, S. & Korkeakoski, M. (2022) Transformatiivinen oppiminen kestävyysosaamisen tukena, UAS Journal, 3/2022, 11.10.2022. <https://uasjournal.fi/3-2022/transformatiivinen-oppiminen-kestavyysosaamisen-tukena/>.

Lapin AMK/Lapland UAS (2022) Lapin AMK Master School, Lapland UAS YouTube Channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyFIhrLho40&list=PLMVFtm90HwM0r7Xr_PsdNoHszVjOGGzQM&index=2.

MaSS (2023) Master of Managing Sustainability and Systems Change, Lapland UAS Master School, web pages. <https://www.lapinamk.fi/en/Applicants/Masters-degrees/Managing-Sustainability-and-Systems-Change>.

Tuomela-Pyykkönen, M. & Tyni, S. (2023) Developing interdisciplinary higher education to support sustainable and systemic change in the Arctic area, IPSERA International Purchasing & Supply Education & Research Association, IPSERA Conference 2023, Paper 7264.

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