

Learning Service Design in the heart of nature

26.5.2025

International BIP intensive course brought students to develop sustainable mobility in the landscapes of Lauhanvuori

The international Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) course organized by the Degree Programme in Cultural Management at SEAMK took place as planned from May 12–16, 2025, in the Lauhanvuori-Hämeenkangas UNESCO Global Geopark. The 3-credit course brought together around 25 students from five European higher education institutions to tackle challenges related to accessibility and sustainable mobility through service design.

Nature as inspiration and teacher

The course theme, *Developing Sustainable Transportation Systems in Geopark Lauhanvuori-Hämeenkangas*, offered students the chance to engage with a real-world development challenge: how to promote sustainable and accessible mobility in a sparsely populated natural area. Students worked in interdisciplinary and international small groups, combining expertise from fields such as cultural management, logistics, journalism, and engineering.



Fontys teacher Jim Prince introducing students to the principles of service design (photo: Jussi Kareinen, 2025).

The inspiring learning environment surrounded by nature, along with shared cultural evenings, fostered a positive and communal atmosphere. Service design was the pedagogical core of the course. Its potential was clearly demonstrated in the final pitches, where student groups presented their developed concepts to representatives of the Geopark. The concepts were deemed usable and may be directly applied in the region’s development.



SEAMK student Fanny Kokki and Thomas More student Shana De Smet presenting their group's outcomes during the final presentation (photo: Jussi Kareinen, 2025).

Collaboration as the foundation

The course planning began already in January 2024 at a design meeting of the HEROES alliance held in the Netherlands. SEAMK lecturer Jussi Kareinen developed the course idea together with international colleagues and proposed the Lauhanvuori-Hämeenkangas area as the location due to its authentic accessibility challenges.



Led by Geopark geologist Pasi Talvitie, the students explored various park attractions, with the area’s diversity capturing their interest (kuva: Jussi Kareinen, 2025)



Photo: Jussi Kareinen, 2025.

The practical implementation of the course at the Lauhansarvi Nature Center went smoothly. Communication between students and teachers was efficiently handled through a shared WhatsApp group, enabling quick responses and information sharing. Close collaboration between partner institutions and the support of

SEAMK’s International Office also played a key role in the course’s success.

Looking ahead to future BIP courses

At the end of the course, the teachers compiled development suggestions for future implementations. Going forward, they aim to reserve two shared intensive weeks in advance to ensure participation from all partners. Earlier communication and greater visibility of BIP courses in curricula will also support student recruitment.

The course demonstrated that interdisciplinarity, intercultural interaction, and real development challenges create meaningful and motivating learning experiences. At the same time, Finnish students gained a unique internationalization experience in a domestic setting – or as it was said during the course: “in the woods, but in the world.”



At the end of the week, a group photo was taken in front of the nature tourism center (photo: Jussi Kareinen, 2025).

The course outcomes will be shared within partner institutions' networks in formats such as blogs and publications. Additionally, the course's impact will extend to practical improvements in the Geopark's

development, where student ideas may lead to real enhancements in accessibility and sustainability in tourism.

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The author of the article served as SEAMK’s representative and course coordinator.