

SiliconVilstal



The Region is the Lab
Silicon Vilstal - a rural initiative



Digitization of rural regions is an increasingly important topic. But it is often discussed from an urban perspective, or only focused on technical infrastructure.

Social innovation is the key to taking advantage of digital opportunities.

The approach should be holistic and rooted in the region.

If done right, rural regions will be the digital winners of the future.

**We make digital opportunities tangible.
For our region.**

We make digital opportunities tangible - for our region.

Silicon Vilstal – at a glance



Silicon Vilstal is a participatory initiative and virtual innovation lab in Vilstal, a rural region of Lower Bavaria, founded in early 2016. The initiative is focused on innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity.

The basic idea of Silicon Vilstal is: We show ourselves and others what the Vilstal already has to offer, and we learn together what it can achieve in the “digital” age. The creative exchange between the rural region, international experts, start-ups and initiatives from all over Germany gives Silicon Vilstal its unique flavor.



Silicon Vilstal organizes a large annual participatory festival with lectures, workshops, exhibitions, real world experiments, pop-up makerspaces etc. Further activities include rural mobility challenges and “Bauer sucht Startup” (Farmers seek startups), a rural participatory startup incubation program.

People, institutions, municipalities and companies all support the initiative. Silicon Vilstal is a program partner of Munich Creative Business Week and was selected to represent Bavaria at “Innovation made in Germany” / TheARTS+.

Silicon Vilstal has supporters from the region and far beyond.

Supporters 2017



+ many volunteers and unnamed supporters

The blend of specialists and inhabitants is key for our work.

Stakeholders & Participants



Our key stakeholders are regional municipalities, sponsors, communications partners, participatory partners and, last but not least, the people of Vilstal itself. Participants are made up of 2/3 Vilstal inhabitants, with 1/3 coming from outside of Vilstal, such as startup teams, the Silicon Vilstal community, and visitors.

Silicon Vilstal activities are organized by the voluntary core team, which performs an ongoing search for new topics; curates the activities; covers funding, PR, locations and networking across the region and beyond; etc.

Each activity is developed in collaboration with selected specialists and experts, i.e. designers, architects, artists, technologists, startup coaches etc., and carried out with teams made up of a mix of specialists and rural inhabitants. An important task of Silicon Vilstal is the “cultural translation” which takes place between specialists and inhabitants.

Our work is cross-sectoral, but with some main areas of focus such as mobility, agriculture, architecture & design.

We use interactive methods and digital tools.

Methods and digital tools



Silicon Vilstal works with a range of interactive methods and digital tools, in particular service design / design thinking, educational maker exercises (3D-printing, robotics,...), a broad range of startup coachings and down-to-earth prototyping. Based on a comprehensive understanding of different methods, we hand-pick the appropriate method and specialist for each project.

Beyond formal methodology, we have a set of operational practices, e.g.

- Effectuation (we seek short-term impact instead of long-term planning)
- Capability-based roles (we shape roles and tasks according to the capabilities and dedications of our voluntary team members)
- “Promise contracts” (we believe in verbal commitments and conclude written contracts only if necessary)
- Common sense (in everything we do)

The overall initiative is participatory, the individual activities are developed and carried out with blended teams of experts (method, moderation) and inhabitants (on-site organization, regional view and content, next steps towards implementation).

Five principles guide all our activities and projects.

Silicon Vilstal Principles

1 The Region is the Lab.

The Vilstal region has people, municipalities, companies, spaces, capabilities ... the whole region is our lab. We use existing spaces for our work and incorporate people's capabilities and dedications instead of paid services.

2 Exchange is the Essence.

Inspiration works both ways. International experts, designers and artists contribute experiments and workshops to Silicon Vilstal. As our guests, they also get a different view on things during their interactions with the locals. Our startup incubation program "Bauer sucht Startup" (Farmers seek startups) offers co-working at rural hosts, tailor-made coaching, curated networking and down-to-earth prototyping.

3 Always think Trialability.

We drive our participatory network towards tangible offerings that can be tried out by everybody, young and old. All activities should generate learning effects. We like prototypes and experiments more than concepts. We don't write reports about what to do. We do.

4 Heritage grounds Innovation.

We play with tradition and mix it with digital. If re-invented, cultural heritage can be a solid ground for innovation and humanize the digital. Our rural environment can also help to find meaning behind innovations, especially for urban startups.

5 Rural is on a par.

We don't hide our meadows and forests. We place old farms into the spotlight. We sing traditional yodels with the international crowd at TheARTS+ and offer Vilstal cheese at Munich Creative Business Week. "Rural" is simply a different style.

1 The Region is the Lab.

Silicon Vilstal – a real world lab in Lower Bavaria



Drawing by Liane Hoder, Himbeerspecht

2 Exchange is the Essence.

Example Video: „Bauer sucht Startup“ (Farmers seek startups)

Our startup program “Bauer sucht Startup” (Farmers seek startups) turns a rural region, with its municipalities, corporations and inhabitants, into several hundred square kilometers of incubation and acceleration space which is open for startups from any industry.

“Bauer sucht Startup” offers free rural co-working with local farmers and other hosts. As well an unusual work environment, Silicon Vilstal provides a broad set of coaching offerings and curated networking.

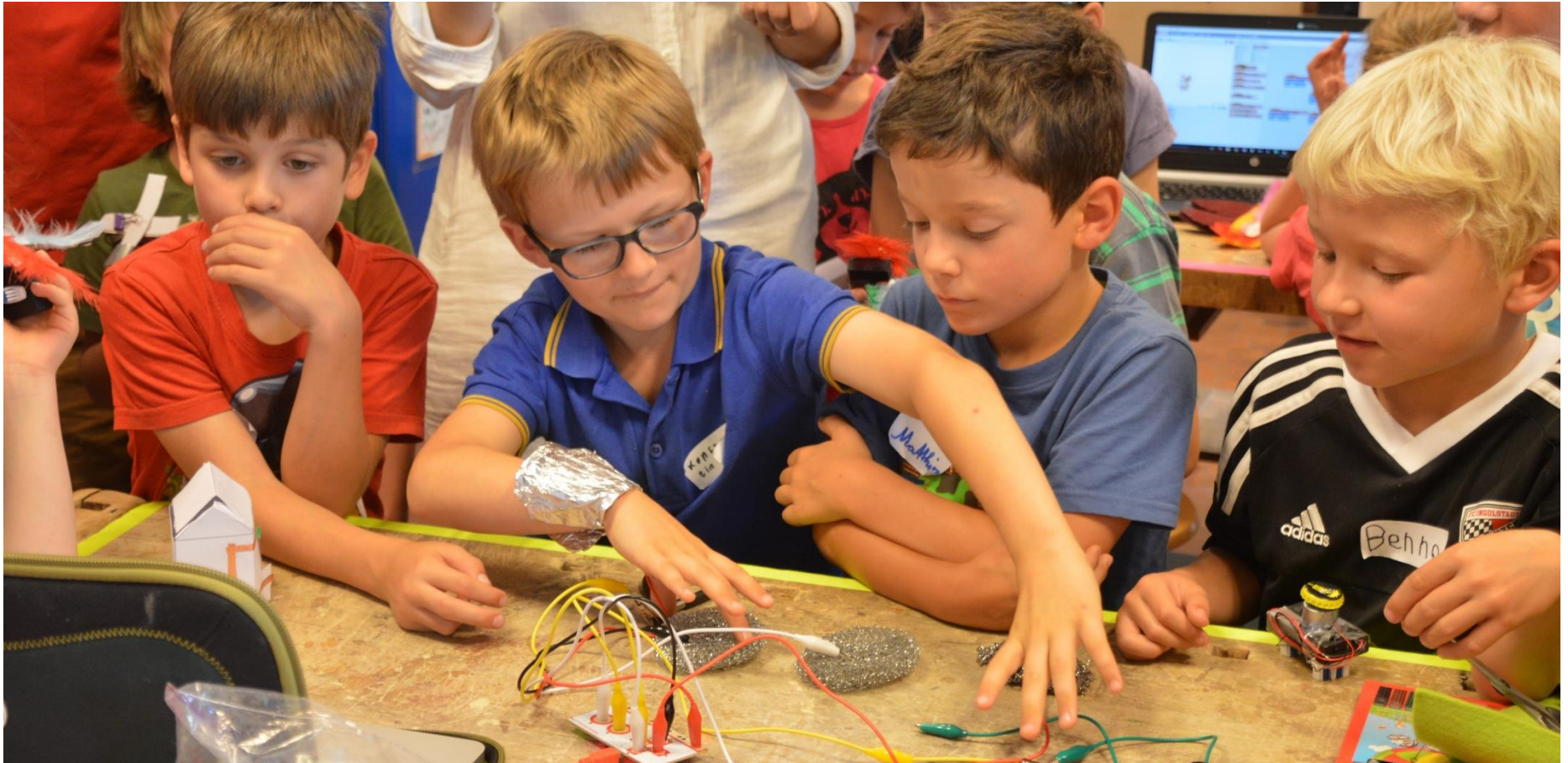
Startups can prototype and live test their products and services, together with municipalities and corporations, that decide and act in “startup speed”. According to their needs and stage of development, we offer support with media coverage, contacts, test users, pitching opportunities etc.



Upper left photo: HEAVN

3 Always think Trialability.

Example: Pop-Up-Makerspace for children



4 Heritage grounds Innovation.

Example: “Creativity in the digital era”

Hartmut Esslinger is a world renowned designer. In particular, he designed the first Apple computers with Steve Jobs.

At Silicon Vilstal Festival 2017, Hartmut Esslinger spoke about “Creativity in the digital era”, going back to his early days in a rural village.

His speech came via Skype from New York into an old barn in a small Vilstal village. The location, a historical farm, is nowadays the Bavarian center of traditional costumes.



5 Rural is on a par.

Example Video: Silicon Vilstal @ TheARTS+ (Frankfurt Book Fair)



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Silicon Vilstal – Digital Region

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Photos: Silicon Vilstal, unless otherwise stated