

## Digitalisation Among NGOs – The Case of the Toimeksi.fi Online Service

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### Abstract

*Digitalisation, which can be described as an effective way to change operational environments and utilise information technology use, is an important topic nowadays. Usually digitalisation becomes concrete in the form of online services. Among NGOs there is a need for digital services. The Association for Social Affairs and Health in Northern Ostrobothnia coordinates the Toimeksi 2.0 project, the aim of which is to create an online service for NGOs and citizens. The NGO online service is one way to activate citizens' participation in society. The content of the online service will be events, training courses, support group activities and volunteer work tasks, which should enhance welfare in communities. The question is how to activate both NGOs and citizens for fluent information transfer. The challenge is the breadth to which NGO actors operate to create the content, and whether citizens can find the content they need. The online service is strongly connected to civil society, civil activity, sociocultural structures, and human security for social communities. Human security is related to social communities, participation and information sharing. With knowledge*

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*sharing, the community creates its capacity as participation in local regions. Through community capacity and digital inclusion, NGOs have an important role to play as coordinators of information gathering for decision-making processes.*

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**Keywords:** NGO, welfare, digitalisation, digital inclusion, online service, information security, human security, participation

## **Introduction**

This study focuses on the field of NGOs in Finland. A non-governmental organisation (NGO) is an organisation with non-profit purposes. NGOs can also be defined as third sector organisations. An NGO is usually an association or alliance with a special interest in sport, health, social affairs, politics or culture. In this paper the focus is on social and health NGOs. In Finland, there are approximately 10,000 social and health associations, many of them local. An NGO itself includes the idea of community and its members. In Finland, the associations work to support and maintain the welfare of citizens. Social and health associations put forward problems and developmental issues to public discussions and decision-makers. The purpose

of this is to address issues, support welfare and health services, and have an effect on legislation.<sup>1</sup>

The Toimeksi 2.0 project is responsible for developing the Toimeksi.fi online service. With the online service, NGOs are able to make their content available on the internet. The first version of the Toimeksi.fi online service was created in 2013. The new version is being developed in the form of a collective website with parallel local online services. The local view was requested by the NGO field and helps people to contact their own local online service when they need information and support. The owner of the online service is responsible for the whole service and its functions, the resourcing of the maintenance and development of the online service, and the achievement of the aims.<sup>2</sup>

The owner of the Toimeksi.fi online service is the Toimeksi network, which comprises all the organisations that have a parallel online service under the national online service. Each organisation has representatives in the Toimeksi network. However, the administrative mandate is necessary, for example when related to contracts with the technology partners and competitive tendering, because the network cannot proceed without the official administrative management and decision-making. The network has given the administrative mandate to the Association for Social Affairs and Health in Northern Ostrobothnia, which is ultimately responsible for the Toimeksi 2.0 project. The project's aim is to develop the Toimeksi.fi online service, its

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<sup>1</sup> Juha Peltosalmi, Tyne Hakkarainen, Pia Landen, Vertti Kiukas and Riitta Särkelä, "Järjestöbarometri 2014" (Shutterstock: Helsinki, 2014), 93.

<sup>2</sup>JUHTA 2014, 8.

usability and accessibility, and to extend the network to new areas during the period 2016–2018 (see: <http://avustukset.stea.fi/organisation/220>). The Toimeksi.fi online service also has an important role to play. It is the vision of the Toimeksi.fi online service to be a platform for NGO activities across the whole country. By using quantitative statistics and qualitative experimental knowledge, NGOs can participate more effectively in decision-making in the field of social and health care.

Research about information technology use among citizens requires structure and methods. In this paper the case will be the Toimeksi.fi online service. The community stores the relevant information on its IT. It is important that the information is of high quality and access to the information is easy.<sup>3</sup> The online service will be open and accessible to different kinds of users. The information needs to be found easily and the online service should be able to engage people with the NGOs' activities. This paper addresses the nature of social and health NGOs and their capacity for information management and digitalisation.

This paper will first focus on social and health NGOs from the viewpoint of knowledge in Finnish society. The second section reveals the concept of digitalisation among NGOs. The third section reveals the connection between NGOs and online services. The fourth section introduces the empirical case of the Toimeksi.fi online service. The fifth section presents the concept of security and how it is related to information systems. A discussion and conclusion will tie all those concepts together from the perspective of digitalisation among NGOs.

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<sup>3</sup> Louis-Marie Tchouakeu et al. 2011, 6-7.

## **Social and health NGOs and knowledge**

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for the governance of health and social services at the state level. It has the responsibility for social and health care policy planning, steering and implementation. The third sector plays an important role when preventing problems, enhancing health and welfare, and developing new methods for activities. Cooperation between NGOs and public agencies is needed when developing participation in society.<sup>4</sup>

Health and well-being are important strands of work in the current health and social services reform programme in Finland. It is one of the biggest reforms affecting the public, private and third sectors in the country. Ritvanen and Sinipuro<sup>5</sup> are claiming that the baseline and developmental perspectives of the reform must be that of citizens. Public administration must be responsible for citizens' health and the provision of adequate social and health services.

In Finland, associations are usually hierarchically structured, where the central association has a national function and smaller actors are regional and local associations. Most of them employ staff but there are also many volunteers that take care of the core work of associations. Municipalities and NGOs are experiencing rapidly developing cooperation. Local parishes are usually partners with the NGOs and hold similar activities, such as group

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<sup>4</sup> Sosiaalisesti kestävä Suomi 2020, 2011, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Hannu Ritvanen and Jaana Sinipuro, "Tiedolla johtaminen toimialan murroksessa" (BoD – Books on Demand: Helsinki 2013), 52, 80.

meetings. Cooperation is usually organised through networks. For example, the Municipality of Oulu cooperates with NGOs based on the lifespan model with focused service platforms. Those services are focused on welfare and preventive work.<sup>6</sup>

In Finland, municipalities have published reports that reveal the state of welfare in their areas of responsibility and their collaboration with welfare NGOs. One important aim in today's society is to find solutions to the increasing problem of social exclusion. The welfare reports are tools for planning, implementing and evaluating welfare policy. In addition, they provide information about the health and well-being of the population, changes in health and well-being, the functionality of the service system, and the costs of preventive work. NGOs are active participants in producing the reports. The whole concept is based on cooperation between municipalities, NGOs, parishes and private companies.<sup>7</sup>

With social communities and supportive groups, the purpose is to reduce social exclusion in society. Community, sharing and sociality are related to home and community space, which represent security for the people living in a particular area. With the online service, this also takes place on the internet. Through professional use of the online service, an adviser can easily access an NGO's contacts and activities and gather sufficient material for the client.

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<sup>6</sup> Merja Halonen, "Kokemuksia järjestöjen ehkäisevästä työstä kaupungin palvelujen näkökulmasta." in *Järjestöt ja kunta hyvinvointia edistämässä*. Katja Häkkinen and Marjo Tourula (Esa Print Oy, 2013), 86.

<sup>7</sup> Hyvinvointikertomus kunnan strategisen johtamisen työvälineenä, 2017.

## **Digitalisation among NGOs**

Digitalisation is mostly a change in the operational environment that includes information saving, organising, searching and utilisation. Information systems and platforms have replaced both traditional newsprint and offices. The change is also socio-cultural and the clearest sign can be found in customer behaviour.<sup>8</sup>

Digitalisation includes online services. An online service is a collection of web pages that provide a service to its stakeholders. Web pages are produced by a certain body, for example an organisation, or they have a certain content.<sup>9</sup> JUHTA, the Advisory Board for Public Administration Information Management, defines an online service as open web pages accessed by a browser that include information. Different kinds of devices could be used by users to browse the web pages, such as mobile devices.<sup>10</sup> In this definition JUHTA excludes network services and embedded systems (see JUHTA 2014, 3), as do we in this paper.

In order to provide users with a good service, the online service should always be usable and accessible. Usability relates to how a device, a piece of software or a service is designed for the targeted end users. Accessibility in turn refers to how easy it is for a user to start using the device, software or service. Accessibility of an online service refers to how usable the service is by

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<sup>8</sup> Virpi Hämäläinen, Hanna Maula and Kimmo Suominen, "Digiajan strategia" (BALTO Print: Lithuania 2016), 21, 23-24.

<sup>9</sup> Valtiovarainministeriö 2008, 12.

<sup>10</sup> JUHTA 2014, 3.

individuals with disabilities, such as those who are partially sighted or hard-of-hearing.<sup>11</sup>

The use of the online service is based on user experiences. Hämäläinen et al.<sup>12</sup> argue that users are more involved in organisations' activities and value creation in new ways because of digitalisation. Service culture must be based on a willingness to help the customer. The most important purpose has to be a positive customer experience. The service concept includes promises to the customer. The service promise is more than the concept to the customer and it is also a good way to communicate and present the service level to the customer.<sup>13</sup>

Through an information system, NGOs and their activities can be accessed directly via the internet. NGOs have some specific features that affect the nature of the information system. The development of an information repository about NGO activities benefits workers in associations as well as financial stakeholders. The main thing is to remember that information systems are embedded in the social context of NGO activities.<sup>14</sup>

When creating the online service for NGOs, the challenge is how widely the NGO actors participate in creating the content and whether citizens will find the content they need. The main content on the online service will be NGO events, training courses, support group activities and volunteer work tasks.

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<sup>11</sup> JUHTA 2014, 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> Hämäläinen et al. "Digiajan strategia," 15.

<sup>13</sup> Belinda Gerdt and Kari Korhikoski, "Ylivoimainen asiakaskokemus" (Talentum: Helsinki, 2016), 104, 108.

<sup>14</sup> David Lewis and Shirin Madon "Information Systems and Nongovernmental Development Organizations" The Information Society, 20: 1-10, 2004.



On the Toimeksi.fi online service there is a range of basic NGO information, such as documentation, guidance and instructions, guidelines and other practical information. There are also statistics about NGO activities. That information is necessary for NGOs because of their obligation to report to funding organisations. The survey conducted among the social and health associations reveals that a civil society strategy is needed among NGOs in Finland. The strategy would help when defining the actions for reducing regulation. Actors need simple steering in terms of information gathering without there being overlapping systems.<sup>15</sup>

The inclusion of the concept of digital inclusion in the study offers effective support when considering actors using online services in different communities. The overall outcomes from digital inclusion are: a) increased equity, b) improved access to opportunities, information and services, and c) an increase in skills and confidence.<sup>16</sup> Digital inclusion can also be seen as a tool for reducing social exclusion, as IT is seen as a powerful instrument for social change.<sup>17</sup>

Bandias<sup>18</sup> shows that local communities have highly committed members and their activity is based on cooperation to maintain or develop new, local services. The benefit to the community is the most important value. Considering the online service, this could refer to a community message board that communicates its activities, volunteer work or events. Community

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<sup>15</sup> Peltosalmi et al. "Järjestöbarometri 2014," 113.

<sup>16</sup> Digital Inclusion, 22.

<sup>17</sup> Ana Ramos and Lidia Prieto "Digital Inclusion of Low-Income Women: Are Users of Internet Able to Improve their Life Conditions?" (ACM 2014), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Susan Bandias "Building Indigenous Social Capital in an Online World." (Journal of Media and Communication. 2010), 44.

capacity also refers to a community's ability to interact with other organisations. Local capacity is about information production and information sharing, and reliable information about community activities should be available online. Information technology can then have an impact on participation, collective action, norms of reciprocity and trust within, across and with communities.<sup>19</sup> A community's knowledge can be called collective knowledge, which can exist within different types of communities.<sup>20</sup>

NGOs have close contact with the communities they operate in because of their basic methods of working. NGOs may enjoy a high level of trust and acceptance among people. They also provide information, analysis and expertise about the communities. That helps in the implementation of different projects, agreements and policies.<sup>21</sup> The online service will be created as a result of the wider developmental project, and the project partners are all NGO actors. It is important that the network has the capacity to create knowledge for state contributors, municipality actors and citizens. Citizens get the opportunity to participate in civil society more effectively and associations get information about these participants through statistics.

NGOs' efforts to develop local knowledge through information systems must be focused on specific forms of knowledge, which means that access to local

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<sup>19</sup> Javier Mignone and Heather Henley "Impact of Information and Communication Technology on Social Capital in Aboriginal Communities in Canada." (Journal of Information, Information Technology, and Organizations. 127-145 2009), 127.

<sup>20</sup> Donald Hislop "Knowledge Management in Organizations. A Critical Introduction." (Oxford University Press. Ashford Colour Press Ltd: Gosport, Hampshire 2013), 23.

<sup>21</sup> Shikoh Gitau and Gary Marsden "Fair Partnerships – Working with NGOs." (Human-Computer Interaction. Volume 5726 of the series Lecture Notes in Computer Science: 704-707, 2009), 704-705.

knowledge must be taken into account through different tools and communicative activities.<sup>22</sup> Digital inclusion is one thematic way to clarify online service use. Digital inclusion can be defined as having access to information technology and online services. It is not just physical access to technology, but also having the necessary skills, confidence and capabilities to use the online service. One has to have physical access to the internet, the ability to effectively use it, and to make use of the equipment and skills.<sup>23</sup>

When planning an information system, there must be a comprehensive planning process when an organisational environment is taken into account. Organisation strategy, structure and culture must be borne in mind when planning the contents of the information system. NGOs have an important role to play when creating information systems because they are participatory by nature, and they are motivated to advance human rights and societal development. NGOs are able to integrate both local and global agendas and learn from changing opportunities and demands from political, social and cultural viewpoints.<sup>24</sup> Because of their size and nature, NGOs are agile enough to adapt and change according to the behaviour of people. The online service offers many different functions for its users. The challenge is to target the relevant information to the right audience.

The biggest risk for an online service is lack of users. There are some characteristics of the offline population: a) low income, b) unemployment, c)

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<sup>22</sup> Kenneth Pigg and Laura Crank, "Building Community Social Capital: The Potential and Promise of Information and Communications Technologies." (The Journal of Community Informatics, Vol. 1, Issue 1, 2004), 69.

<sup>23</sup> Digital Inclusion, 3-4.

<sup>24</sup> Lewis and Madon, "Information", 2, 8-9.

lack of basic literacy skills, d) live alone and e) live in rural areas.<sup>25</sup> There is little information available to draw definite conclusions on how information technology might improve or diminish engagement of groups. Helsper<sup>26</sup> suggests that the outcome is that best practice initiatives should not start by thinking about information technology, but by thinking about the needs and habits that groups have.

### **The Toimeksi.fi online service**

The Toimeksi.fi online service is a nation-wide service. The content of the online service is national and includes important information for NGO actors, such as how to run an association, how to recruit new skilled people to an association, and how to attract funding. For users, i.e. citizens, the Toimeksi.fi online service provides information about what third sector action and volunteering means. Users can also find and read stories that other users have written regarding their experiences of volunteering and events they have taken part in. Actors from NGOs can create their own account in the service and collect statistics on their activities, which they have to report on to their funding organisations. The Toimeksi.fi online service also gathers different kinds of content from all the parallel online services, such as events, news and social media content, as well as relevant information about NGOs, associations, volunteer work tasks, guidance, and so on. There is one central online service, Toimeksi.fi, and eight parallel online services.

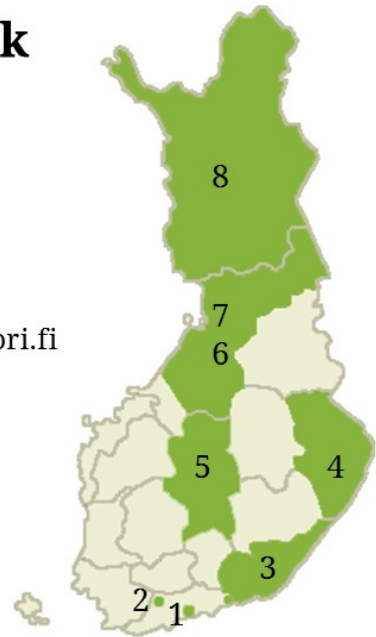
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<sup>25</sup> Digital inclusion, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Ellen Helsper “Digital Disconnect” 2011, 13.

## Toimeksi.fi network

1. Espoo: [espoolaiset.fi](http://espoolaiset.fi)
2. Lohja: [lohjalaiset.fi](http://lohjalaiset.fi)
3. Southeastern Finland: [yhdistysinfo.fi](http://yhdistysinfo.fi)
4. North Karelia: [jelli.fi](http://jelli.fi)
5. Central Finland: [yhdistystori.fi](http://yhdistystori.fi)  
Northern Ostrobothnia:
6. [ihimiset.fi](http://ihimiset.fi) and
7. [varesverkosto.fi](http://varesverkosto.fi)
8. Lapland: [lappilaiset.fi](http://lappilaiset.fi)



Under the national Toimeksi.fi service there are the parallel local online services. The content of the service in Lapland includes all registered NGOs and their activities in Lapland, while the service in Espoo includes mainly information about NGOs and their activities from the city of Espoo, along with some content from NGOs in the capital area. Users are able to find national, regional and local information on every online service, regardless of which service they are using. The users normally use the parallel online service, i.e. the regional/local online service, as shown in the table below.

<b>Online Service</b>	<b>Users in 2014</b>	<b>Users in 2015</b>
<b>lohjalaiset.fi</b>	online service published in 2016	online service published in 2016
<b>espoolaiset.fi</b>	ca. 58,600	ca. 70,300
<b>yhdistystori.fi</b>	ca. 48,000	ca. 48,000
<b>lappilaiset.fi</b>	ca. 8,900	ca. 17,000
<b>jelli.fi</b>	ca. 84,900	ca. 71,200
<b>ihimiset.fi</b>	ca. 31,000	ca. 33,500
<b>toimeksi.fi</b>	ca. 16,900	ca. 11,200
<b>varesverkosto.fi</b>	information not known	ca. 33,200
<b>yhdistysinfo.fi</b>	ca. 15,100	ca. 15,400

Table 1. Statistics showing users of the Toimeksi.fi online service and parallel services.

For users who are residents of a certain municipality or city, the parallel online service is always considered to be the most appropriate one, because users are more familiar with the local/regional online service, they are able to access the required content in fewer steps, and even the domain name normally reminds the user about the area. This is the situation in Lohja, for example, where the online service is called Lohjalaiset, meaning ‘people from Lohja’. The idea is not to burden the users’ memories and help them to better remember the online service’s name so that the threshold for starting to use the online service is as low as possible.

The service idea of an online service is called a concept. The concept could also be a prototype or other initial plan for the online service. The concept includes the aims of the online service and the communication, user groups and the user needs.<sup>27</sup> The concept of the Toimeksi.fi online service was created among the network during the spring of 2016. The basic themes were developed by the Toimeksi 2.0 project and the members of the network provided ideas and opinions from the local areas for the initial concept. The concept was used for competitive tendering and it formed a basic document for the communication plan for the Toimeksi 2.0 project. The concept will be used in cooperation with the technology partner, which helps to construct and develop the content management system.

The Toimeksi.fi online service offers services for supporting and enhancing civil society. Support groups constitute the low threshold activity. Volunteer work tasks are also basic services in the online service. The online service has to offer information as clearly as possible. For example, the visualisation of activities must follow the standards of accessibility. Pigg and Crank<sup>28</sup> suggest that information technology has the capability to enhance and extend social networks by providing access to resources that can be mobilised for action. Moreover, it is possible to create support mechanisms of enforceable trust and reciprocity using information technology. Information technology supports learning functions that may reduce conflicts and improve the quality of decision-making. By creating access to resources and decision-making processes, technology enhances the solidarity of the group.

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<sup>27</sup> JUHTA 2014, 6, 9.

<sup>28</sup> Pigg and Crank "Building", 69.

The Finnish eHealth and eSocial strategy 2020 objectives state that citizens should be able to access online services no matter where they live, and that reliable information on well-being and services should be available. With information systems, training and education is needed, as some information systems are relatively old and the levels of support provided varies.<sup>29</sup>

### **Human security and the security of online services**

Security of the community includes access to equal participation<sup>30</sup>, and it has a connection to social geography where societal welfare concerns both economic and social relations. Different groups in society have unequal rights to work and welfare regulation.<sup>31</sup> However, knowledge has a localised capacity, which is created by learning processes where the question is how those learning processes relate to place.<sup>32</sup> Harris<sup>33</sup> suggests that local communities have increasing levels of expectation. In northern communities, policies should take the common values they experience into account.<sup>34</sup> Human security threats can be defined by international organisations, national

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<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2015, 10-13.

<sup>30</sup> Kimmo Kajaste "Information – a Prerequisite for Democracy. In *Vital North. Security. Democracy. Civil Society.*" (Finnish Committee for European Security STETE. Hakapaino Oy, 1999), 58.

<sup>31</sup> Frank Hansen "Welfare States and Social Polarisation." In *Voices from the North. New Trends in Nordic Human Geography.* Jan Öhman and Kirsten Simonsen (MPG Books Ltd., Bodmin, Cornwall 2003), 69-70

<sup>32</sup> Anders Malmberg and Peter Maskell "Localised Capabilities and Industrial Competitiveness." In *Voices from the North. New Trends in Nordic Human Geography.* Jan Öhman and Kirsten Simonsen, (MPG Books Ltd., Bodmin, Cornwall 2003), 24.

<sup>33</sup> Margaret Harris "Third Sector Organizations in a Contradictory Policy Environment." In *Hybrid Organizations and the Third Sector. Challenges for Practice, Theory and Policy.* David Billis (Palgrave Macmillan 2010), 32.

<sup>34</sup> Gerald Zojer and Kamrul Hossain "Rethinking Multifaceted Human Security Threats in the Barents Region. A Multilevel Approach to Societal Security." (*Juridica Lapponica* 42, 2017), 57, 71.



governments and NGOs.<sup>35</sup> The identity of NGOs therefore has a close connection to the concept of human security. Humane activities, agility and the capability of constant information processing are the main strengths of NGOs.

Human security can be found within various disciplines and is usually connected to some other concept or discourse.<sup>36</sup> It is related to a person's life situation and the roles they find themselves in. Security and insecurity are permeable variables which pass through different life situations. They are reflections of the quality of an individual's life. The policy of human security means that structures of society, environment and culture have to be strengthened to avoid societal instability and fragmentation. Human security and its connection to the concept of quality of life is important. The concept of quality of life is an informative way of approaching the field of social welfare. Social security and welfare are not synonymous, but they share many similarities. Welfare is based on resources and incomes, and the basic idea of the social security system comes from situations where people have to survive.<sup>37</sup>

Information security includes three main purposes: a) confidentiality, b) availability and c) integrity. Confidentiality confirms that all information is used by the right person in the right place. Availability means that information

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<sup>35</sup> Taylor Owen "Human Security – Conflict, Critique and Consensus: Colloquium Remarks and a Proposal for a Threshold-Based Definition." (SAGE Publications. Vol. 35(3) 2004), 384.

<sup>36</sup> Zojer and Hossain "Rethinking", 2.

<sup>37</sup> Sakari Kainulainen "Sosiaalinen turvallisuus ja yhteiskunnan rakenne." In *Inhimillinen turvallisuus*. Pauli Niemelä and Anja Lahikainen, (Vastapaino: Tampere 2000), 288-291; Pauli Niemelä "Turvallisuuden käsite ja tarkastelukehikko." In *Inhimillinen turvallisuus*. Pauli Niemelä and Anja Lahikainen. (Vastapaino: Tampere 2000), 22-23

is in the right form and integrity ensures that information doesn't include mistakes.<sup>38</sup> Information security policy and security planning takes care of the whole organisational environment with information management. The policy should cover organisations' information security strategy, legislation, structure, practices, contracts, support for information security management and risk management.<sup>39</sup> In addition, information security management is a concept that should be afforded even more attention in organisations. Information security is not only technical; in fact much more focus should be directed towards management, human behaviour and learning processes.<sup>40</sup>

Digitalisation requires new skills and motivation for information accessibility and processing Technology brings with it both opportunities and challenges. In any given community, it is possible that the whole population does not have access, the skills or the motivation to use technology. The biggest threat is that expanding digital services and technology will leave some people marginalised, which means that they are left outside of online services.<sup>41</sup> Marginalisation may become evident through such elements as low income, unemployment, lack of basic literacy skills, living alone or living in rural areas (see the chapter Digitalisation among NGOs).

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<sup>38</sup> Mika Hakala, Mika Vainio and Olli Vuorinen "Tietoturvallisuuden käsikirja" (Jyväskylä: Docendo, 2006), 4.

<sup>39</sup> Paavo Porvari "Tietoturvallisuus liiketoiminnan johtamisessa, prosesseissa ja henkilöiden toiminnassa." (Aalto University publication series. Doctoral dissertations 131/2014. Unigrafia Oy: Helsinki 2013), 46-47; Hakala, Vainio and Vuorinen "Tietoturvallisuuden käsikirja", 8.

<sup>40</sup> Porvari "Tietoturvallisuus," 218-220.

<sup>41</sup> Hilary Davis, Luke Hespanhol, Jane Farmer, Joel Fredericks, Glenda Caldwell and Marius Hoggenmueller, "Designing Participation for the Digital Fringe." Workshop, ACM 2017), 3-4.

When considering the Toimeksi.fi online service and its nature as a national service, the main focus is to develop it from the viewpoint of citizens, NGOs and stakeholders. However, increasing digitalisation guides people to use online services and it will be interesting to observe how stakeholders participate in content production during the development of the system. Local communities' social capacity and the online service among NGOs create a unique societal platform. By supporting local communities, it is possible to activate people to use the online service. Frustration and tension can arise when information technology connections fail to function effectively, or if the community does not have immediate access to the internet.<sup>42</sup>

However, socio-cultural factors are influencing peoples' willingness to share knowledge and therefore enhance the utilisation of IT. These factors include conflicts, trust, time, or concerns about loss of status.<sup>43</sup> Social marketing can be one tool for enabling users' attitudes to using IT. Social marketing affects human behaviour in terms of changing an audience's behaviour. It is based on the exchange of the marketer's needs and the target audience's wants.<sup>44</sup> Local social marketing is one way of activating people and changing their behaviour when they are communicating via the online service.

## **Discussion**

The main focus of the Toimeksi.fi online service is to increase welfare by producing information about NGO activities in civil society. The

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<sup>42</sup> Bandias "Building," 47.

<sup>43</sup> Hislop "Knowledge," 205.

<sup>44</sup> Kumar, Saini and Kumar 2014, 34-36.

implementation of an information system alone will not lead automatically to better management of knowledge.<sup>45</sup> Mignone and Henley<sup>46</sup> see online capabilities as opportunities to be inclusive information networks. Citizens have an important role to play as participants of those networks. Human life consists of experiences, beliefs and values, which are closely related to experiences, contexts and knowledge.<sup>47</sup> Digitalisation brings about information systems and applications for information collecting and sharing, and information security is needed when personal information is addressed in information systems and online services.

Information storage, retrieval, analysis and sharing are the elements that individuals and groups exchange via software apps.<sup>48</sup> To understand a specific social network, one must understand who is included and what kind of information is being passed along.<sup>49</sup> Information and communication technologies support collaboration and decision-making among citizens. Local knowledge consists of people, places, cultures and resources.<sup>50</sup> Local communities are the basis of human security because of peoples' information sharing. However, the information system has to be sufficiently flexible to satisfy the different needs of the users. The role of NGOs can be supportive in enhancing digitalisation in communities. It is important that citizens understand the role of NGOs, which is based on a low accessibility threshold. NGOs have an important role to play because they are agile enough to cross

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<sup>45</sup> Hislop "Knowledge," 202.

<sup>46</sup> Mignone and Henley "Impact" (2009), 138-141.

<sup>47</sup> Lais Fumincelli, Alessandra Masso, José Martins and Isabel Mendes, "Quality of life and ethics: A concept analysis." (SAGE Publications. Nursing Ethics 1–10, 2017), 7.

<sup>48</sup> Pigg and Crank "Building," 60-61.

<sup>49</sup> Quinn Bernier and Ruth Meinzen-Dick, "Resilience and Social Capital". (2014), 13.

<sup>50</sup> Pigg and Crank "Building," 69.

boundaries and have connections to resources and innovations through network activity.<sup>51</sup>

Ashraf, Grinfeld and Quazi<sup>52</sup> argue that long-term studies focusing on behaviour changes would capture the changes initiated by information technology. In this case, there is considerable opportunity to develop human-centred information technology research, involve user experience in research, and increase the visibility of NGO activity and capacity among the public and stakeholder audiences. Saeed, Rohde and Wulf<sup>53</sup> argue that there is a need for more ethnographic studies and participatory development for NGOs who use information technology effectively. In addition, it will be important to evaluate the implementation process of the Toimeksi.fi online service. Users have to be engaged in the service's implementation process – until now they have tested it, which helped to uncover potential faults and errors. Influencing users' attitudes and competencies can be seen through the concept of digital inclusion. Through long-term research it is possible to achieve an understanding of how each online service is used in different communities throughout Finland. Through comparative analysis it is possible to find some variation in different areas and local communities.

The question is how to participate in the activities and functionalities of the online service with citizens who are separated by long distances, such as those in Lapland. The engagement of users is most important when establishing an

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<sup>51</sup> Bernier and Meinzen-Dick, "Resilience," 14-15.

<sup>52</sup> Md Mahfuz Ashraf, Helena Grunfeld and Ali Quazi, "Impact of ICT Usage on Indigenous People's Quality of Life", *Australasian Journal of Information Systems. Research on Indigenous ICT*. 2015, vol. 19. (2015), 13.

<sup>53</sup> Saqib Saeed, Markus Rohde and Volker Wulf, "Designing IT Systems for NGOs" *A Computer Science and Information Systems Manifesto*. Volume 19 (2008), 564.

online service. Social marketing has potential as a tool for digital inclusion. The most important thing is to achieve trust among users of the online service. However, digitalisation among NGOs needs more research, especially regarding the concepts of human security and digital inclusion in local communities.

## **Conclusion**

In Finnish society, it is important to recognise that NGOs can also benefit from innovation through digitalisation. Information gathering, sharing and analysing with the use of an online service creates a platform for using information in decision-making processes. The local level provides information on the practices and needs of a community. Knowledge from communities is important in decision-making processes from both local and national viewpoints. Information flow is the main principle for enabling empowerment and participation in communities. Information and information gathering in the Toimeksi.fi online service creates a basic tool for societal effectivity, and knowledge-based decision-making is one channel for making the work of NGOs visible. The role of NGOs is important at the local level, and collecting both experimental information from citizens and statistical information about NGO activities in communities function as tools for societal information steering.

The NGOs' online service is one way to activate citizens' participation in society. This form of digitalisation must take social and human elements into account. It will be important for positively affecting NGO actors' attitudes towards producing content for the online service. The outcome should be that

every user has access to the online service, and they have the skills and confidence to use the online service in a secure way. That includes citizens, professional advisers and NGO content producers. Social marketing is one possible tool for enhancing the use of the online service and participation in NGO activities. All the information on the online service must be constantly updated, explicit and accessible for different users. That will create a sustainable, reliable and secure platform for information management for NGOs in local communities.

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