



Case Study Briefing

USER-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES IN KAINUU, FINLAND



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Contents

- 01 Overview
- 02 Key policy implications
- 03 Context
- 04 Sources of evidence
- 05 Main findings
- 06 Impact & Implications

1. Overview

A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT COMMUNAL MEANS AND SERVICES

The subject of this InnoSI case study and evaluation report is the process of *User-driven Public Service Development* (i.e. *Asiakaslähtöinen lähipalvelujen kehittäminen*). *User-driven Public Service Development* is a collaborative, facilitated, experimental process taking place between municipal citizen groups, municipal service sectors and other relevant parties, using service design methods for planning and producing municipal services. The *Development* process has taken place in Kajaani and other Kainuu region municipalities in Finland from 2014 onwards, was in its most active period during 2014–2015, and will continue until the end of 2017.

The User-driven development method can in principle be used to develop all kinds of services. In Kainuu it was targeted at preventing the social exclusion of elderly people and the youth outside of working life or education. As a product of this project, several service concepts were generated. The community development concept *May I Help You?* (i.e. *Arjen pelastajat*) was chosen as the one to be realised, and this work is to continue until the end of 2017. *May I Help You?* aims at preventing social exclusion by bringing unemployed young people and elderly persons living alone into contact with each other. In the *May I Help You?* concept the young people perform small, everyday services on behalf of the elderly.

2. Key policy implications

THE METHOD PROMOTES PARTICIPATORY CITIZENSHIP AND DEMOCRACY AND REQUIRES A CHANGE IN LOCAL DECISION-MAKING CULTURE

- Some citizen groups are harder to reach than others: strategies should be prepared to get all the relevant parties to attend the development work
- Local implementation requires local and dedicated actorship - projects and ideas can only be imported to a limited extent
- Besides local entrepreneurship introducing participatory democracy and new practices requires changes in local administrative culture

3. Context

The project *User-driven Public Service Development* was launched in 2014 by the *Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities* (i.e. *Suomen Kuntaliitto*) and the *Social and Healthcare Division of the Kainuu Region* (i.e. *Kainuun sote-kuntayhtymä*). The *User-driven Public Service Development* process can be seen as proceeding according to a *service design process* (discovering and clarifying the problem field, creating service concepts, testing service concepts and implementing them). The broad framework in the project has been both provided by and subsequently studied empirically by innovation specialist Tuula Jäppinen from the *Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities* (the studies are Jäppinen 2011 and 2015; references at end of the text). Jäppinen also, among other actors, worked as a developer in the Kainuu process.

Altogether the project *User-driven Public Service Development* yielded 27 different models or service concepts. One of these — *May I Help You?* — was chosen to be realised. *May I Help You?* is a *community development* concept and model where unemployed youth at risk of social exclusion are brought to do small everyday services on behalf of elderly people living alone. The principal aims are to integrate the youth to society and to help them find their strengths and to alleviate the practical and loneliness-related problems of old age.

Essentially, though we are concentrating on the first one, in the studied Kainuu case we have two projects or programmes to consider: the *User-driven Public Service Development* process, which has been used to build up the *May I Help You?* concept, which, again, is also a programme. The two programmes are content-wise intertwined but logically separate.

Since we have two logically separate programmes, we also have at least two problems, tasks or task groups that these programmes address. Firstly, the *User-driven Development* process is based on the citizens' *interest for democracy*. Secondly, the *May I Help You?* concept attempts to satisfy the *need for social inclusion* of two citizen groups. These two groups, unemployed youth and elderly people who are between 75–85 and living at home, were chosen as the two target groups already in the pre-planning period of the Kainuu region *User-driven Development* project. Their position in the Kainuu region is especially problematic. The population in the Kainuu region is diminishing: people are moving out. Especially the youth are leaving the region. Kainuu is aging: the proportion of people over 65 years has doubled from 1980 to 2012. Unemployment has been high in the area for a long time already and is the worst in Finland. Also the state of citizen wellbeing is poorer than in the rest of the country.

Both the *User-driven Development* process and the resulting *May I Help You?* concept can well be regarded as social innovations that have investment-like properties. They are creative and novel practices and processes and oriented to producing benefits in the future.

Jäppinen, Tuula (2011): *Kunta ja käyttäjälähtöinen innovaatiotoiminta. Kunnan ja kuntalaisen vuorovaikutus palveluja koskevassa päätöksenteossa ja niiden uudistamisessa*. [Municipalities and user-driven innovation. Interaction between a municipality and a resident in decision-making on services and service restructuring.] Acta Publications No. 230. Helsinki: The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities. (Available online, retrieved 17.6.2016.) URL: <http://urn.fi/urn:isbn:978-951-44-8659-3>

Jäppinen, Tuula (2015): *Citizen participation as a systematic development tool in renewing social and healthcare services — a Case Study in the Public Service Context*. Master's Thesis, Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Leppävaara, Finland. [Available online, retrieved 19.2.2016.] URL: <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/87102>

4. Sources of evidence

The study is basically an *evaluation study*. It consisted of the following parts: literature review, needs assessment, programme theory, and process and impact evaluation.

A large part of the argument in the study is based on a previous participatory action research study by Tuula Jäppinen (2015), named *Citizen participation as a systematic development tool in renewing healthcare services* (see reference information at the end of chapter “3. Context” above). Various methods, such as interviews, self-documenting diaries and design probes were employed in the *User-driven development process*, and studied by Jäppinen. New empirical data for the present study was obtained by the author of the InnoSI study (Klemelä) by conducting interviews in 2016 on the actors who participated in the *User-driven Public Service Development* process during 2014–2015. Among the participants in the process were citizens belonging to the two target groups of the service development work: *unemployed youth* and *elderly people*, both groups in danger of social exclusion. Also participating were, of course, the project *developers*, and the municipal *politicians* and *office-holders*.

All the other groups could be reached for these interviews conducted in 2016, except for the unemployed youth, who had moved on in their lives since the most active *User-driven Development* period.

5. Main findings

The intervention studied was the empirical case of bringing the *User-driven* method into the Kainuu region, and applying it successfully to produce a more democratic decision-making culture and superior and more appropriate service concepts. According to the empirical interview results conducted for the study the *Development* process in Kainuu 2014–2015 went well and it was well led. The interviewees in general felt that that the process was dialogical and municipal citizens were genuinely listened to. As a project the developing project was rather long and heavy.

A *theory of change* (or, in other words, programme theory) explicates in a simplified form the “impact value chain” to produce the targeted impacts. The theory of change for the *User-driven Development* project can be condensed in the following table.

Stakeholders	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
Municipal citizens -old -young	Time and effort	The <i>User-driven Development</i> process as realised	The 27 service concepts	Culture change in municipal decision making	Impacts equal outcomes to the extent that outcome change is exclusively due to the <i>User-driven Development</i> method
Municipal -politicians -office-holders	Technical expertise			Change in the quality and sufficiency of services	
Developers	Knowledge - circumstances - needs - interests				
Third sector	Finances				

Out of the 27 prospective concepts produced by the Development project, one was selected. The *May I Help You?* concept is actually more like a *communal operations model* than a service. This shows that the *User-driven development* project is able to produce results in rather a flexible way, despite its service design roots.

Some work has been done to actually implement the *May I Help You?* concept in Kainuu, and there have been some successes, but there seems to be general agreement that the efforts in the region have so far not been sufficient. Since January of 2016, *SOSTE Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health* (i.e. *SOSTE Suomen sosiaali ja terveystyö*) has entered into co-operation with the *Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities* and the *Social and Healthcare Division of the Kainuu Region* in spreading the *May I Help You?* concept to counties. There is, therefore, wider belief on the potential success of the concept.

6. Impact & Implications

Several implications and recommendations can be drawn from the conducted study. They are listed below.

- A likely problem with any user-led development in municipalities is that all citizen groups can't be equally well reached. Strategies should be prepared to get all relevant parties to attend the development work.

- To enhance the use of *User-driven Development* in municipalities and to secure the transfer of citizen-generated knowledge to the municipal decision-making processes, the *Development* method should be integrated as a permanent and structural part of the local government decision-making culture. Its wider implication is that it introduces an element of participative democracy to government.

- The implementation of both *May I Help You?* and the *User-driven* process model are in urgent need of local leadership. Only local actors — associations, organisations and enthusiastic individuals — can actually take the initiative and create something visible out of the plans and models.

- In Kainuu (and later on in Finland generally), the process of designing service concepts (i.e. *User-driven Development* method) should be brought out in a stronger way alongside or even before its one single result, the *May I Help You?* concept. It now appears to some extent that one practical product of an interesting and potentially far-reaching experiment has taken the spotlight and the hard core of the whole project — the developing of participatory democracy — has been somewhat ignored.

- The *User-driven Development* process produced a total of 27 different service model. The *May I Help You?* concept was selected for implementation from among them. The other models should be revisited — useful practices may be left.

- On a societal level the *User-driven Development* method (participatory democracy) and the *May I Help You?* concept have also, at least latently, a welfare political agenda, an employment political agenda, and even commercial implications. In the welfare political agenda, civil society is taking charge of functions that formerly used to be the realm of public government. In the employment political agenda, functions that formerly may have created paid employment (design and performance of welfare functions) are transferred to the realm of voluntary work. Voluntary work (if not public government any more) may displace commercial activities. The *User-driven* method and its products therefore also need to be properly discussed from a political viewpoint. The issues are: what kind of welfare policies are required and desired for the future, to what extent and how are the functions of public government, civil society and private care firms redistributed, and how do we compensate for the work of those citizens who may not be a part of mainstream work but still perform valuable and impact-laden services for the community?

In conclusion, and from a practical point of view, we can say that a process of user-driven development requires thorough planning, scheduling and inspired facilitating. It is a rather heavy process in its entirety and therefore it might be advisable to use just parts of it according to local needs. Municipal citizen groups are reachable to different degrees and this has to be taken into account when planning the process. Realizing the results of the process requires that we can find and name the local actors who take responsibility for following them through.

7. Further information

For further information on InnoSI: Innovation in Social Investment: approaches to social investment from the scientific perspective, visit our website at <http://innosi.eu/>

To view the Community Reporting video with a personal experiences of the case study please follow the link below

<https://communityreporter.net/story/ristijarvella>

<https://communityreporter.net/story/hyvinvointia-kulttuurista-wellbeing-culture>

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