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HOW ARE THE NEW ICTS BEING USED
IN COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION? A
LOOK AT PROJECTS DONE IN TAMPERE,
OULU AND NORTHERN KARELIA

In the late 90s new ICTs were introduced to community communication. This thesis is a comparison of three projects done in Finland in this area i.e. Mansetori in Tampere, Naapurit.net in Oulu and Oppiva Ylä-Karjala in Northern Karelia. This thesis looks at what new features new ICTs have given to these specific communities sociologically as well as technologically. I also look at how these communities have developed during the time of the projects. Have new ICTs aided the process of creating better community spirit by creating new ways of communication? How did the people accept these new ICTs as a communication tool? What was the general attitude towards these projects? Methodology of this thesis includes an analysis of the in-depth interviews done with the project co-ordinators, and relevant literature. As main results I would mention the willingness of the people living in these communities, to include new ICTs as a way of communication. Some community spirit was improved by the discussions and local news articles seen in the ICTs. But the main result, in my opinion is that there is still a long way to go in order to make new ICTs available to all (lack of education and guidance exists), and the fact that community spirit can be only reinforced by ICTs. Face-to-face communication is still a necessity in local community communication.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

1.1.1. The birth of virtual communities

Since the beginning of the Information Society era virtual communities and community communication online have been a hot topic among academics and also other people in the western societies. There have been many research projects conducted on this phenomenon in the past, especially in the last few years and the present. One of the prominent researchers, Robert Angelusz expresses this notion in his discussion about the new technologies and the changes in democratic communication. He concludes that "Various groups and electronic communities may get in touch with one another both in a private and in a public way, may discuss and synchronize their points of views and could present a united front in relation to certain events" (2001:233). Howard Rheingold also has his idea of the virtual community. According to him they are "a place (…) where individuals shape their own community by choosing which other communities to belong to" (1993:57-80). This comment is intriguing in the light of the research projects done lately, where electronic communication has been brought in to organic communities. Hence, people in organic communities can take part in a virtual community within their social, organic community. Mäkinen agrees with this as she concludes that "online community is interactive both inside the community and between residents and officials, municipals and other social actors" (see Internet source 4). The birth of virtual communities is in fact a result of the development in new technologies. ICTs (information and communication technologies) and CMCs (computer-mediated communications) have taken a strong hold on our everyday social life and one reflection of this is virtual communities. As a result of these changes in communication and in society in general, according to Mária Heller "The various cultural genres and forms are becoming apart of a common integrated communication system, and their relationship to one another will change as a result" (2001:199). When

discussing information society, one thinks of ICTs right away. For example, Manuel Castells has a very positive outlook on the power of the Internet. According to him "the Internet possesses technologically and culturally embedded properties of interactivity and individualisation. Thereby it may enable the construction of electronic communities that connect rather than divide people" (2002:105). But when you think of it, ICTs are not the determinant of a person in information society. It is still the fact that you are a part of a society per se. Manuel Castells agrees with this when he states, that "we need to locate the process of revolutionary technological change in the social context in which it takes place and by which it is being shaped" (1996:4). In other words, technological determinism is a myth, instead societies internalise technology to suit their needs.

According to Cronberg,

> "I used to research the use of telephone and its influence on people's everyday life. I remember that the crucial significance of the telephone was the fact that you had somebody you could ring. The telephone itself does not increase connections to people, if you don't have anyone to ring to. That is why in information society the communities you are a part of are emphasized" (2001:30).

1.1.2. Masuda's two types of communities

A Japanese futurist called Yonedi Masuda was one of the very first researchers to publish a book concerning information society. He did this as early as in the 70s. In his book Masuda emphasised that in the information society there needs to be two different types of communities. First of all there needs to be virtual communities that are global in nature. One can be a member of a virtual community created for example for parents of sick children, where they can communicate globally with people who are in the same situation in life. On the other hand, there needs to be organic communities, where the locality of the community is the essence. That's where one gets the face-to-face communication from his/her peers, neighbours etc. What Masuda didn't think of was the possibility of belonging to both of these communities simultaneously by communicating

electronically with the people from your organic community. This is what the projects done lately in Finland have been interested in. How the organic community communication can be transferred from face-to-face to electronic form, or how the ICTs can add to community communication. It is my intent to analyse projects done in Finland i.e. Mansetori in Tampere, Naapurit.net in Oulu and Oppiva Ylä-Karjala in the Northern-Karelia region of Finland. In the following I will take a closer look at these three projects.

1.2 Introduction to projects

1.2.1. Mansetori

The most famous research project concerning online community communication here in Tampere must be the Mansetori project in which different parts of town get to create their own web pages on to the general platform of Mansetori. The starting point for Mansetori project was another project done in the University of Tampere between 1998-2000, i.e. "Locality in the Global Net". Basically the point in this project was that different parts of town get to introduce themselves to the wider public, and also that the local people get to communicate in an electronic form. The web pages in Mansetori contain basically the same information within all parts of town i.e. discussion list, photos from neighbourhood activities, flea market, short news stories on things going on within the neighbourhood and important links. Later on the Mansetori project has grown significantly offering more and more information on its web pages. One of the biggest reasons for Mansetori's growth is the fact that it has been funded steadily through out the project. After the "Locality in the Global Net"-project finished, Mansetori was put under another project's wings. This time the project was called "The Evolution of the e-Communities –project" and it lasted from 2001 to 2004. The city of Tampere also recognized the importance of Mansetori, and started to fund it in 2001. During this time the city itself had a project going on, in which they encouraged people to use more electronic communication and the Internet in general. This project (which still goes on today) is called eTampere. This project's sub division

which concentrates on public's net services and net skills development is called infocity. Minority groups in Tampere have also had access to the Mansetori platform. The two minority groups which took part in Mansetori were the foreigners in Tampere and the Romanies in Tampere. They have found a new source of information and communication in Mansetori pages. And of course, for a minority group, having something that they can call their own is especially important. I will look at the details of Mansetori project later on in this thesis, for now I will move on to the next project i.e. Naapurit.net.

1.2.2. Naapurit.net

Naapurit.net is a project that took place in the northern part of Finland, in Oulu to be precise. The project took place between 1998 and 2004, and it was meant to be Oulu's version of Mansetori, i.e. a portal for the public to communicate and learn how to create electronic material for the web. In fact, Naapurit.net was a part of the same project as Mansetori, i.e. "Locality in the Global Net". But in this project Naapurit.net was limited to one web page i.e. http://raksila.kaleva.fi. This is because at the time Raksila was the only part of town that wanted to join the project. Later on Naapurit.net extended to influence many other parts of Oulu as well. Physically Naapurit.net was founded on the local newspaper Kaleva's server, whereas Mansetori is based on the Tampere University's server. When compared to Mansetori one can see that Naapurit.net is a much smaller scale project. Nevertheless, according to the project manager Ilkka Kumara, the content structured by the public is pretty much the same. Pages contain each community's history, event calendar, services section and certain sections for associations and youth activities (2004:84). Although the resources for Naapurit.net have been much smaller than for example Mansetori, it has proved itself to be a functional option for community communication. If the technology will work properly. I will go into more detail about the collaboration between Mansetori and Naapurit.net later in this thesis. The third project I will look at is the Oppiva Ylä-Karjala project that took place in the eastern part of Finland, Karelia to be exact. In the following I will go through the main aspects of this project in order to later analyse it in detail.

1.2.3. Oppiva Ylä-Karjala

Oppiva Ylä-Karjala project took place between 1998 and 2000. As many other projects, OYK was a part of the renewal of the Finnish information society structure. It was funded mainly by Sitra. The towns that took part in it were Nurmes, Juuka and Valtimo. Other financial aid came from the Northern-Karelia Labour and Trade Center (Työvoima- ja elinkeinokeskus) and a Learning Center at Nurmes that is a part of the Northern Karelia Educational Municipality Federation (koulutuskuntayhtymä) (Uotinen et al 2001:39). The aim for this project was to educate the local people to act within the information society and to create a "survival strategy" for the area in order for it not to become isolated from the Finnish information society (Uotinen et al 2001:39). It has been so that the remote districts of Finland have been in danger to split in two when it comes to people who know how to use computers and in other ways act in the information society. Also, the split can be seen in people in general. Some are successful in life in general and some are not.

The main goal of the OYK project was to prevent these tendencies by creating new state of readiness, structures, areas of operation and the cooperation between the municipalities in the area (Uotinen et al 2001:41). Local unemployed people were taught how to use the computers after which they created a local intranet that served state offices, towns, businesses communities and individuals. The local businesses were offered a free training session in order for the employees to learn how to use the intranet. Also, some thirty computer kiosks, within which the use of the Internet and the Intranet was free, were set up in the Northern-Karelia area (Uotinen et al 2001:39). In order to make sure that everyone in the area had a chance to get an Internet connection as easily as possible, the project also educated some people to be so called "field men". Their work consisted of making house calls to the local people and set up and Internet connection for free. This enabled at least 700 homes to join the Intranet and the Internet community (Eriksson et al 1999:227). After creating this thing the researchers called "the most networked remote district in the world" it was made possible for researchers to start studying the social affects of this

project. First of all, it was noted that the notion of a community was one of key issues when researching this project. The mere fact that you know how to use a computer does not make you a citizen of the information society. You need people around you with who you can communicate i.e. you need a community to belong to. Whether it is organic or virtual, it doesn't really matter. Jones agrees on this when he concludes that "the social construction of the reality that exists on-line is, however, not constituted by the networks CMC users utilize, it is constituted in the networks. It would be far easier to understand the physical. Or hardwired, connections than to understand the symbolic connections that emerge from interaction" (1998:5). The Intranet within the OYK-project was actively used because of its local nature. People could log on and discuss topic important to them locally. The Intranet also encouraged people to learn about the communities close to them i.e. other towns that were involved in the project. According to Ilpo Koskikallio, the OYK-project's coordinator, the Intranet within these three communities has brought people within them closer together. Hence, instead of staying at home and watching TV people are logging on to the Intranet to discuss matters with other people from the area. This has led to the fact that topics discussed on the Intranet crossed town limits, thus bringing in new points of view. Oksa and Turunen have also researched the OYK-project. They conclude;

> "It has been thought that a local community can work better if it uses Intranet as a tool. As a result there will be an interactive effect in which the virtual community has shaped the organic community (…) In this project locality is not seen as an opposite to the outside world, which would increase the feeling of displacement and insularity. On the contrary, the Intranet is seen as a forum where you can meet the challenges for the general development and create new state of readiness in order to find new opportunities" (2000:65).

So these are the three projects I am going to take a look at in order to define how new ICTs have been taken into consideration when focusing on community communication. In the following I will introduce my aims and objectives for this master's thesis.

1.3. Aims and objectives

As with all types of projects it is extremely important to take a look at how the research has been taken into consideration with the specific field of study, and compare it to similar projects done previously. My master's thesis aims to do just that. It compares these three projects (Mansetori, Naapurit.net and Oppiva Ylä-Karjala), looks at what were the goals set for them, how they were met and what was missing from the project i.e. what goals were not met as efficiently as planned. It is my understanding that even if ICTs might have an effect on community communication, they cannot create community spirit per se. In this thesis I will look at the possibility of ICTs replacing more traditional forms of communication, e.g. face-to-face communication.

1.4. Methodology

For this particular research project I will use mostly qualitative research methods i.e. interviews. The qualitative method called *in dept interview* allows the researcher to really get into the world of the participants. According to Priest 'the key thing that distinguishes the depth interview from survey research is the researcher's flexibility to explore interesting things that come up' (1996:107). By this she means that the interview has only a few key areas of discussion from which the interviewee talks about, as they like. The conversation may go to areas that are of interest to the researcher, and of which the researcher would never have know to ask about specifically! To choose these specific building blocks of the interview the researcher writes a list of questions. This list is called an interview schedule (or interview guide). As the name suggests the interview is very open ended and the questions on the interview schedule are only there to guide the interviewee. In depth interview takes a lot of time, not so much the interview itself but the coding of it. Because of this I will limit my in depth

interviews to three, which I will conduct with people who were actually involved with the design and realisation of the projects. It is important to get their point of view published here also with my own analysis. The people I will interview include Jukka Oksa who has studied sociology and other social sciences extensively. He has concentrated on different local development projects, Oppiva Ylä-Karjala being one of them. At the moment he works as a special researcher, and the head of Social Sciences Department in the Karelian Institute, which is part of the University of Joensuu. For the Mansetori-part of this thesis, I will interview Pauliina Lehtonen, who has worked in the University of Tampere Journalism Research and Development Center for three years now. She started to work with Mansetori in 2000 and has been a part of the development and maintenance crew ever since. At the moment she works especially for Mansefoorumi and as a part time coordinator for Mansetori in general. Ilkka Kumara has been one of the main coordinators for Naapurit.net, so I will interview him for this part of my thesis. He was the one who concluded Naapurit.net in 2004. I will ground my analysis on these interviews and the relevant literature available to me concerning these projects.

1.5. Definitions and concepts

1.5.1. Information and coummunication technologies (ICTs)

The two key concepts for this study are new ICTs and community communication. I will restrict the new ICTs only to the Internet in order to be clear on what this master's thesis is all about, and also, to be strict with myself not to let the discussion on new ICTs to get out of hand.

1.5.2. Community

Community communication is hard to define since it seems so obvious to grasp. Community communication is a part of our everyday life. We communicate with our community merely by existing in it. According to

Stappers, "public communication is the diffusion of messages in such a way that in principle no one is excluded from receiving them and no one is excluded from this process by the sender" (in Jankowski et al, 1992:19). Jankowski himself notes, that "in studies describing small scale media or community media the expression 'community communication' was introduced (e.g. Halloran, 1975) which stressed the geographical locality and/or a community of interest as an essential context for community media" (1992:19). One of the best descriptions for community communication comes also from Jankowski as he states, that "community communication is (…) a form of public communication, of making public and creating a public within the context of a specific community" (1992:19). In order to make it easier to define community communication, let me divide this concept into two parts i.e. community and communication.

Firstly, community has multiple definitions, but most of them agree with Schuler who argues that "Communities are the heart, the soul, the nervous system, and the lifeblood of human society" (1996:1). When looked at more closely, the definition of a community can understood in at least three ways. First, it may mean a group of people who live in the same geographical area. Although Schuler has a fine point here, Lehtonen disagrees with it somewhat. According to him, common place of residence does not require common actions nor any sense of togetherness (1990:16, 218). In fact, Lehtonen sees two principal fields of action for local communities i.e. action as a social communication organisation and action as an unofficial pressure group towards the city when it comes to certain topics" (1990:220).

Second, a community may be a group of like-minded people (e.g. certain professions, virtual communities etc.). And third, there can also be a "sense of community". This means, according to Schuler, that "community members have a sense of belonging to a greater social unity" (1996:3). These are the very basic definitions of the term community. It has to be taken into consideration, though, that communities have evolved during time, and the essence of a community is changing with the society itself. Also, the fact that we are going through globalisation and developing new ways of using

technology, has an influence on the communities around the world. Researchers talk about the erosion of communities. According to Schuler, the reasons for this deterioration are transitory nature of our communities, i.e. people do not stay in one place long enough in order to form a traditional community where everybody knows everybody and work together to create a safe community. Also, according to Schuler, fear is also a factor. Since the people in the same neighbourhoods do not know each other, they have become more wary of each other. It is possible to people's minds that the person next door may turn out to be a serial killer or a drug dealer, or even something worse.

Extreme individualism is also a factor. People think they need to make it on their own, it is expected of them. This fights with the traditional communities, where people in the same neighbourhood took care of each other, helped each other. Schuler blames the erosion of communities on obsessive consumerism as well. According to him "when one is considering products for individual consumption, one is not considering activities or ideas to support the community" (1996:7). After looking at Schuler's ideas, one must remember that he is an American researcher, and thus bases his ideas on the American communities. That is to say, there are differences if not between Western Societies, then at least outside them.

Ulrich Beck is another sociologist who does not have such a positive image on society. He sees individualization as a big part of society, which, according to him, has turned into risk society. Beck's theory of modernization is more complex because he sees all the risks and hazards in industrial and scientific development. These new risks are no longer limited in time or space. Nobody is responsible for the hazards. In order for societies to develop, modernization has to be reflexive. People have to criticise science because it no longer has the answers or cures for risks in society. The more modernized a society becomes, the more people become individualized and 'break free' from the structures. Beck periodizates social change. He distinguishes between pre-modernity, simple modernity and reflexive modernity. Modernity coexists with industrial society and reflexive modernity with risk society. Beck also believes that industrial and risk

societies are distinct social formations. Industrial society 'consists' of social classes distributing goods while risk society is individualistic and distributes 'bads' or dangers. The way religious worldviews were demystified in the 19th century, understanding of science and technology were being demystified in the 20th century. Also work, leisure, family and sexuality are 'gaining' a new understanding.

According to Beck classical industrial society is run by a force of production of wealth where risk society is run by production of risks. Technological and economic advancement is being side-lined by risk production. In this risk society individualization is a very important factor. Amitai Etzione, does not think individualization should play such a strong part in today's communities. He has developed the communitarian perspective, according to which

> "Neither human existence nor individual liberty can be sustained for long outside the interdependent and overlapping communities to which all of us belong. Nor can any community long survive unless its members dedicate some of their attention, energy, and resources to shared projects. The exclusive pursuit of private interest erodes the network of social environments on which we all depend, and is destructive to our shared experiment in democratic self-government" (see Internet source 11).

Etzione emphasizes the social side of human existence as well. He does not find it possible for people to live so indivualistically, but as surrounded by others, by the local community. To respect one self as well as the others around you is seen as important, as well as lively sense of our personal and civic responsibilities, along with an appreciation of our own rights and the rights of others; where we develop the skills of self-government as well as the habit of governing ourselves, and learn to serve others-- not just self (see Internet source 11). The idea of community can be seen in many different lights. Here, I have given you the sense of different points of view surrounding this topic. In the following I will look at how communication can be weaved into this conversation.

1.5.3. Communication

There are many definitions to the term communication, in the following I will present those that I found most intelligible. "Communication is the art of expressing and exchanging ideas in speech or writing. The complexities of modern life demand that individuals have a mastery of both oral and written communication skills" (see Internet source 2). But communication is not only oral and written. It can be more complex than that. This can be seen in the case of Net communication. According to Heinonen et al

> "Online communication may also require new types of interaction skills. Our project has shown that participation in a discussion group that is debating and trying to resolve a particular problem requires different kinds of skills than involvement in, say, a network community built up around a leisure interest. In the former case the organisers need to show an enthusiastic, active and analytic approach to the debate and have a clear view on the parties whose views should be brought into public and who should be able to find one another for a n equitable exchange of views in the public online space" (2001:122).

From this it is clear to see that the term communication changes as the society progresses. In other words, communication in the agricultural and industrial age was more straightforward and easy to grasp than what it is in the informational age.

1.5.4. Virtual community

Virtual community, community network, on-line community – all of these terms have basically the same meaning. They are places of communication situated in the cyberspace. Places where people can log in and discuss topics important to them with likeminded people. Howard Rheingold, one of the pioneers in this field, emphasizes the sense of humanity and social support within virtual communities (1993:5). Unlike traditional communities which may be activated simply with the start of communication between people living in the same area, virtual communities need more effort in order to be activated. Virtual communities need to be

created by someone, and users need to actively find a certain on-line community to fit their needs. In this respect, people who find a virtual community to suit their needs often stay as a member for long periods of time. Whereas traditional communities deteriorate more easily, unless its members have some issue they are commonly fighting for.

1.5.5. Computer Mediated Communications

Also, it is vital to know what CMCs are and where do they come from. I managed to find a brief history of CMCs from the Internet (Internet source 1):

> The connections in place for the most widely discussed computer network, the Internet, were formed in the 1960s and early 1970s when the U.S. Department of Defense and several research universities, via DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Program Agency) linked computers. The resulting network, Arpanet, allowed for access to each site's computers not only for communication but for research. The latter role, though, took a back seat to the use of Arpanet as a means for researchers to share information by way of electronic mail. Initially such mailing was in the form we are accustomed to from using the post office; individual messages are sent from one person to another. However, it quickly became clear that messages often contained information to be shared by many users, and thus mailing lists were created. These lists allowed one person to mail one message to a central point from which that message was "bounced" or "reflected" to others who subscribed to the list. Eventually lists became specialized to particular topics, and the terms "bulletin board" and "mailing list" came to have some interchangeability. Bulletin boards, though, generally referred to computers one could reach by dialing through standard phone lines with a computer modem and linking with another computer. The effect of each, board and list, was similar in many ways, as both provided news and information to users. The Internet essentially serves as the main connecting point for many other networks. It has, in a sense, come to be a "backbone" by which networks link up with each other. A common estimate is that there are over 30,000 computer networks with over 1.5 million computers connected through the Internet, and the Internet's number of users grows by 10 percent monthly. The Internet is a decentralized network, and its management occurs via the NSF. However, no one group manages it. Instead, a variety of groups, such as the Internet Society and InterNIC, circulate information, resolutions, and do research on the network's needs.

In general, the term computer-mediated communication refers to both task-related and interpersonal communication conducted by computer. This includes communication both to and through a personal or a mainframe computer, and is generally understood to include asynchronous communication via email or through use of an electronic bulletin board; synchronous communication such as "chatting" or through the use of group

software; and information manipulation, retrieval and storage through computers and electronic databases (see Internet source 3). As I have stated before, the essence of the term communication has evolved during time and society progress. CMCs are one of the best examples of this.

1.6. Earlier research

There has been many different research projects done on the online communication during the time the Internet has existed as a communication tool. Much research has been conducted on the virtual communities, and also, in the last few years, on community communication. The most relevant projects I have found so far are the studies done on the following online communities:

A. The Blacksburg Electronic Village (USA)
B. City of Santa Monica Public Electronic Network (USA)
C. Antigonish Community Network (CANADA)
D. Communities Online (UK)
E. Nettimaunula (Finland)

In one way or another all these projects studied the relationship with online communication and the community. It was extremely important for these projects to create the Information Society by giving people access and guidance on how to use the Internet. Very similarly as what has happened here in Finland with Mansetori, Naapurit.net and Oppiva Ylä-Karjala. In the following I will take a closer look at these projects in order to show why they are relevant to this thesis. I will start this with Nettimaunula which is another Finnish project. In fact, Nettimaunula is a lot like Oppiva Ylä-Karjala. Just like OYK, "Nettimaunula is mainly financed by the Finnish National Fund for Research and Development Sitra and the City of Helsinki. Also the Employment and Economic Development Centre of Uusimaa has contributed to the funding of the project by financing an 8-month-long education period for unemployed" (see Internet source 8). What

was also interesting about Nettimaunula is that they located the project into a poor area, where people were not as likely to adopt new ICTs.

> "The starting point for the project was challenging: low rate of internet connections, exceptional age structure (25 % of inhabitants are over 65 years old) and high unemployment. The questions were: What to do to make people´s living environment better? What are the most effective ways of interacting? How to improve the bad image of the area? How to affect city planning, how to communicate with the civil servants and officials and how to inform each other and build up local networks more efficiently?" (see Internet source 8)

These questions have been relevant to all of these studies. Nettimaunula includes the following aspects in its webpages. Local culture, housing, news & media, services and development. These main topics include many links and a vast amount of information, which is directed for the citizens of Maunula. But what are the projects like outside Finland? Firstly, I will take a look at a project taking place in the USA i.e. Blacksburg Electronic Village which I will from now on refer to as BEV.

> "The concept of the BEV came about in early 1991. At that time, Virginia Tech had a sophisticated campus-wide voice/data network, and began looking into ways to extend network access to faculty, staff, and students living in Blacksburg. The BEV officially opened its doors for business in October, 1993. Today, the BEV group works closely with the Town of Blacksburg, local civic groups, businesses, and individual citizens to ensure that these new communications tools are used to support the every day human activities of Blacksburg"(Internet source 9).

As we can see from this quote, BEV differs from the projects that I am focusing on, because it is built for a community of students where as most projects are built for local communities, or parts of town. What is extremely interesting is the fact that BEV has kept growing all these years, and as far as I have understood, it is an important part of every day life in Blacksburg. Also, the links that BEV provide are wide ranging. Some of the links on the front page include e-community, Arts/entertainment, seniors, neighbourhoods, calendar/news, education, village mall, government, youth, health and services. This wide variety can be explained by the fact that BEV

has been active now for over ten years, which has given it plenty of time to grow. In my opinion, BEV is something we should keep in mind as a goal. Especially because it is created and developed with the aid of the actual users, the locals. Another project on community communication, taking place in the USA is Public Electronic Network (PEN) in the City of Santa Monica. "The city opened PEN, the acronym for Public Electronic Network, on February 21st, 1989" (see Internet source 10). According to Kevin McKeown,

> "PEN consists of three parts. First, there's a comprehensive read-only data base of city schedules, events and the like. Second, there is a mailroom where private messages or "E-mail" may be exchanged. Third is a conferencing area, where residents may participate in city-sponsored discussions of local issues, or begin public discussions of their own" (see Internet source 10).

This shows, again, that the main components of these kinds of projects are pretty much the same in all of them. Also, during the PEN-project, public terminals have been installed. They have been proven to be worthy, because "remarkably, 20 to 25 per cent of PEN usage comes from those public terminals. That has had a significant impact on local political issues. For the first time, the voices of the otherwise disenfranchised -- including the homeless -- are being heard by the community" (see Internet source 10). This fact, is something that we here in Finland may not have considered before, since we do not have as many homeless here as they so in the USA. Our public terminals, or computer kiosks, have been used mostly by the poor. This highlights how the notion of equal opportunity for all has been considered within these projects. As we can see from these projects, citizen communication and community communication are being delth with by the use of new ICTs all over the western societies. They all have basically the same goals, i.e. make new ways of communication available for citizens, and teach people how to use them. Let me continue now to the three main reasons for this thesis i.e. Mansetori, Oppiva Ylä-Karjala and Naapurit.net.

2. MANSETORI

2.1. General description of project

2.1.1. Project background

In "The Rise of the Network Society" Manuel Castells reminds us that in our explorations we need to look beyond technology itself and into society (1996:4). Castells does not play down the importance of technology itself, but at the same time keeps it clear that we should see technology and society as two organisms living in symbiosis. The use of new technologies correlates with specific societies. For example the use of the Internet is very different in Finland, which is free democracy, compared to China, which is still a very strict communist country. According to Heinonen, what was done in the "Locality in the Global Net"-project was the following

> "we have been studying new communications technology and the Internet in particular from a societal vantaga-point and in the context of everyday practices. By embedding technology in its social context, by weighing technical applications in practical terms and by applying technology to everyday communications needs, the project has produced material that will help to shape technology for the better and steer its development in a socially justified direction" (2001:13).

Mansetori is a project that was developed in two stages. When it was first created in 1998, it was a part of a project called "Locality in the Global Net". This part of Mansetori's development lasted until 2000. The second stage of its development took place between 2001 and 2004. At that time it was a part of a project called "The Evolution of the e-Communities". Both of these projects were coordinated by the University of Tampere Journalism Research and Development Centre. In the latter part of the project the city of Tampere took part in the research as well.

2.1.2. City of Tampere

Tampere is the third biggest city in Finland with over 200 000 in habitants, hence the notion of local community is ever increasing. This notion has also been recorded by Schuler who states that "communities are the heart, the soul, the nervous system, and the lifeblood of human society" (1996:1). And "the modern world stresses and overwhelms communities by such pressures as population changes, communication technologies, pollution, urban "development", and global capitalism". (1996:4)" He continues that "ready access to information coupled with the ability for citizens to communicate freely using that information undergirds a legitimate democracy". (1996:16)". The area of Tampere is about 690square km, and the population density is 382 people in a square kilometre. This is about an average in Finnish cities. The population of Tampere is very well educated. Over two thirds of over 15-year-olds have educated themselves after secondary school. This fact indicates that computer skills are also well taught to the citizens of Tampere.

2.1.3. Funding of project

The first part (1998-2000) of Mansetori project was funded by the National Technology Agency's USIX-programme. Additional business partners in the project were Alma Media, Kaleva, TPO and OPOY (see Heinonen et al 2001:5). One of Finland's mobile telephone operators, DNA was also one of the funders in the first part of Mansetori. The continuance for this project in 2001-2004 was funded also by Technology Agency. Business partners during the second part of Mansetori were Alma Media, Kaleva, Oulun Puhelin, and Media Tampere (Sirkkunen et al 2004:19). There are three different parts of Mansetori of which two of them looked at local community communication and one at local journalism in net environment. All these three areas were researched and developed. In the following I will look at these three parts more closely.

2.1.4. Manseyhteisö (i.e. Manse community)

Manseyhteisö (i.e. Manse community) is the part of which Mansetori is probably best know of. In Manseyhteisö different parts of town, local communities, created their own websites to introduce themselves and to discuss topics which the inhabitants found important. Also, in these webpages you can find flea markets, lists of upcoming events and other information important to the inhabitants. Manseyhteisö is not only for the Finns in Tampere, but the foreigners had their own part in this project as well. The foreigners' site is called iTampere. In that site there is to find useful information for foreigners living in Tampere, as well as published articles written by them. Manseyhteisö also includes a site for the Romanies in Tampere. This site offers information on the Romany-culture in Tampere, as well as offers a communication tool between Romanies and other people in Tampere. Basically this website works as an information source for the local residents. The site was created in cooperation with the locals, so that they could make the site reflect their local community. At the moment when the project is officially finished, the sites are still updated by the local citizens.

2.1.5. Mansefoorumi (i.e. Manse forum)

Mansefoorumi (i.e. Manse forum) was created for all citizens in Tampere. The idea was to have an open and public discussion site for everyone. According to Kaivonen, "Mansefoorumi develops local citizen conversation, citizen participation and citizen influencing by using the possibilities gained from the Internet" (2002:5). This becomes obvious when you take a look at the site; the three words on the top of the screen, when you open Mansefoorumi, are: "take part, influence, discuss". In this site people discuss topics like what it is to live in Tampere (sublinks: consumer advice on living, the inhabitants assessment, the future work shop of Vuores), planning areas (sublinks: Iidesranta, Värjäämö, Kauppi-Niihama, Mältinranta- i.e. different parts of town), sustainable development (sublinks:

globalisation market, citizen action work-shop, Tampere 21- action program), citizen well-being (user-based social services, employment action), initiative citizen (sublinks: questions for politicians, Tampere and democracy, city maintenance on co-operation) and archives in which all the topics discussed on Mansefoorumi are collected. There are three groups which have also produced material for this site. They are Tampere-foorumi, Tampere 21-action program and Mältinrannan puolesta-movement. They have brought up certain topics as well as made sure that the following action has taken place in order to follow-up on these topics.

a)   questions to the decision-makers

b)   initiative follow-up: how the initiatives move up the administration branch

c)   part-takers follow-up: supply information from the citizen point of view on planning and preparation processes

d)   information for citizens: participation rights and possibilities to contribute

e)   bringing up the citizens' point of view within the discussion with photos and written text (see Internet source 5)

Tampere-foorumi posted its mission statement on the Mansefoorumi, including the contact information of the people in the planning group. According to Ridell, memos from the Tampere-foorumi meetings before and during the projects, as well as memos from smaller events such as the planning group's meeting with the town's director of planning and with elected officials and civil servants, were also posted on the Mansefoorumi for everybody to see (2001:67). Tampere 21-action programme got a slow star on the Mansefoorumi-site. Since nobody from the programme wanted to host the site, it was for a long time used as a storage for the material produced by the city's environmental unit. At the later time in the project this site was reshaped and injected new life by starting cooperation with a local school (2001:69). Mältinrannan puolesta-movement was definitely the most active part of Mansefoorumi. This is because the topic was such a controversial one. The discussion was about a bridge project, which aroused many opinions. I will go into more detail on the

Mältinrannan puolesta-movement later on when I look at how this project eventually affected local communities.

2.1.6. Mansemedia

The third part of Mansetori is called Mansemedia. The main idea for this part of the project is to process the topics that have come up on other parts of Mansetori e.g. on the Mansefoorumi. According to Martikainen, "over time, a chain of individual stories on a certain planning project will created a history for that particular case, allowing readers who have not followed it from the beginning easily to see how it has evolved" (2001:94). Later he continues that "at best this kind of reporting makes it clear to people that they can in fact influence the course of planning (e.g. the planning of a new residential area)" (2001:94). For this Mansemedia uses journalistic measures. It is important to remember that Mansemedia is for the every day "matti meikäläinen"-type of citizens of Tampere, therefore the topics are often very different from those employed in mainstream media e.g. Aamulehti, the biggest newspaper in the area. The reporters who wrote the stories on Mansemedia worked with the citizens themselves in order to get as realistic points of view as possible. Also, in addition to the "actual" reporters, Mansemedia tested so called "kaupinginosareportteri" i.e. part-of-town-reporters as well. These reporters wrote stories about topics which were hot on the grassroot-level of the communities.

2.1.7. The technical realization and maintenance

The main idea on how to implement the technical part of the research was to get the local citizens involved. This is why the responsibility of updating of the web pages was given to individual community members. Each community founded a planning group, which was responsible for the ideas and production of the contents for the community web page. The size of the group was normally 10-20 people, from which each one was responsible for a certain part of the web page. Also, the communities named the people who were responsible for the up-dating of the web page. They

were given the logins and passwords by the project staff. This group was a little smaller, average 5-7 people, and they updated the web pages from their own computer or at a public computer. It is important to notice that in the beginning of the project, all of these people were trained by the project staff, and later on, at any given time help was needed, it was also given.

2.2. The main goals and how they were met

2.2.1. Mansetori's goals between 1998 and 2000 i.e. "Locality in the Global Net"

When the first part of Mansetori got on its way in the "Locality in the Global Net"-project in 1998, according to Heinonen et al, there were two major goals in the project

> 1)"the development of Net technology, working methods and content models in such a manner that newspapers and other media can contribute to the emergence of lively local communication and debate 2) and, simultaneously, the development of local citizen communication both in itself and as a resource of local journalism" (2001:17).

In other words it was important for the researcher to learn how to develop the local on-line journalism, and how to develop grassroot communication for local public debate. Also, they wanted to learn how to develop the intra-community communication. Based on these goals, Mansetori's outline was created. This becomes clear when you combine these goals with the outlook of Mansetori. First of all, local on-line journalism is put in to practice in Mansemedia, "the objectives in this project were to support a form of Net-mediated online journalism in which the accent is on the citizen perspective and which is dialogical; to develop publishing systems that are suited to this purpose; and to test the possibilities of multimedia journalism". Second, local grassroot communication for local public debate takes it place in Mansefoorumi, "this project used web technology to create a virtual and interactive space of citizen publicness that allows for the parties concerned

to exchange views on important and disputed local issues". And third, intra-community communication takes place in Manseyhteisö, "this project was concerned to develop and study the technical requirements and skills needed in citizen-oriented communication, with a local (neighbourhood) online publications created in the Internet together with community members" (see Heinonen et al, 2001:19). According to Lehtonen, the main goals for Mansetori are "to offer people possibilities to try the Internet and new communication technology, and to find out how it might be utilized in local neighbourhoods….to educate people into becoming active operators" (see interview). These were the social goals of the project. The technical goals, according to Lehtonen are "to develop the source code's publishing system, and on Manseforum, to develop the initiative system…in general new ideas on development on participation tools for the Internet are important" (see interview).

2.2.2. Achieved goals in Mansetori between 1998 and 2000

In order to make this chapter more clear to the reader, I have divided it into two parts. First, I will take a look at the sociological goals, and then the technological goals. This is done because I believe it is important to understand the difference between the two.

Right from the start, Mansetori worked out well. Although, it was noticed that using the Internet for local communication was far from straightforward and easy to realize. The most important part of this project were the citizens themselves. After all, they were the ones that made this project work in the first place. According to Heinonen et al "the significance of new communications technology to local communities is clearly highlighted by the fact that dozens of people volunteered and contributed to the local online publications" (2001:121). Lehtonen agrees with the success of this goal, "the citizen participation and the introduction of the Internet as a new communication tool to the local neighbourhoods was a success" (see interview). The project staff also learned that "citizen-oriented communication on the web can be quickly established as an integral part of

local communities' everyday life…indeed the Net has generated new, meaningful forms and practices of local communication" (see Heinonen et al, 2001:122). Even if the Internet is a brilliant new technology, it should never be forgotten that technology is only a part of society, it might work the society, but never create it. Traditional ways of communication are still the core of human interaction, and no technology can replace for example face-to-face communication. This is because of only seven percent of human communication is verbal. The remaining 93% is gestural. It is true that for example web-cams and such communicate more than verbal information, but still, they cannot replace face-to-face communication.

Also, it is not a matter of course that people even want to learn how to use the new technology. According to Davis, "there are two major factors contributing on how computers are accepted as a tool i.e. perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Furthermore, these factors influence user's attitude and intention to use the system" (in Kaivonen, 2002:42). So in fact, if one does not see any advantages in using computers, they might choose not to. What about community spirit development? According to Lehtonen Mansetori has not created community spirit per se. But the fact that people work together in order to make Mansetori work, that's what enhances community spirit. When people get together to organize the project, face-to-face. Lehtonen also concludes that "it (new technology) is a very firming and boosting factor (in community communication)" (see interview). From this one might conclude that this project has been a very collective occurrence for the communities. Kaivonen agrees with, according to her "as a project, Mansetori has succeeded in offering a support network for lonely pagemakers, and create at least some sense of solidarity between the communities taken part in the project" (2002:94).

The technological goals for Mansetori could have worked out better. It is clear that citizens need much guidance on how to use the new technology. It is easy to learn how to use a Net browser, but in order to produce and publish material on the Net one needs more in-depth knowledge on this technology. This is mentioned also by Heinonen et al "the basic challenge for software development is to find ways of combining

imaginative presentations with ease of use" (2001:126). Also, it was the intention to let different communities create websites that looked like themselves. It was later on realized that this was impossible because the citizens were taught only one publishing method, in order to make the website more original, they would have needed to learn more complex software. And for this they simple did not have the time or energy. Lehtonen is also disappointed with the technological progress of the project. According to her,

> "we have had people working in the project who have studied computer science and who know about things, but at times they did not know enough. Maybe this could have worked out better if we were collaborating with the Technical University or the Hypermedia Lab. Now it feels like something was always going wrong or was working slowly. So in that we could have done better"(see interview).

2.2.3. Mansetori goals between 2000 and 2004 i.e. "Evolution of e-Communities"

After the "first part" of Mansetori was finished in 2000, the University of Tampere decided to continue the research for another three years. It was the researchers' intent to find out what were the long term effects of the local net societies. How they affected the local communities' activity and life in general. Also, they were interested on the relationship between the traditional sources of information (i.e. local media and authority). They wanted to know what kinds of different types of narration one could create and use within electronic net communication, and what were the advantages of collaboration of different net communities. According to Sirkkunen these three goals were operationalized into three different research areas i.e. citizen communication, local journalism and local publicity. This research was actually a continuance to the "Locality in the Global Net"-project that took place in 1998-2000 (2004:3).

2.2.4. Achieved goals in Mansetori between 2001 and 2004

The first research area i.e. citizen communication was a success. The idea was to look at two specific communities in Mansetori i.e. the Romans in Tampere and the foreigners in Tampere. "The main area of interest was the changes and development processes that net publishing had initiated in these communities" (Sirkkunen, 2004:3). The results were encouraging. They concluded that new ICTs offer many new opportunities and chances for entire communities as well as individual people. "These included new skills, career opportunities, better sources of information and communication opportunities as well as new ways to solve problems" (Sirkkunen, 2004:3). Sirkkunen continues that "it was noted that if the community members only had the technical, skilful, and psychological qualifications, they are able to innovate new ways of action and net applications" (2004:4). One of the best innovations was the "ask about the Roman culture"-site, in which people could ask questions about the Roman ways of life and traditions. This site became very popular, which indicates that the new ICTs may actually work out well to enhance the social collaboration between different groups and communities.

For local journalism, Mansetori developed a system where local people wrote stories about the multiple topics from their community. As a support system, they were given education on how to use the new ICTs, e.g. an easy to use publishing system. This part of the project worked out well. Those citizens who were already active in the communities, now found a new way to express themselves. The topics for the stories were various, but what was important, they were humane and interesting for the local citizens. This is where local journalism vary from mainstream journalism. For example, when the biggest mainstream newspaper in Tampere, Aamulehti writes a few lines on how a certain house has been invaded in Pispala, at the same time you can find a full report on the event with many photos on the Mansemedia web site. Another difference between mainstream journalism and local journalism is, according to Martikainen, that, "traditional

journalism has been criticized for giving the voice to the decision makers and other officials. Local journalism gave an answer to this critique" (in Sirkkunen, 2004:94). This is because, according to Kurki, "in citizen journalism people write the stories themselves. They have things to say about their lives, and by writing, they learn to analyze their thoughts, sharpen their opinions and listen to suggestions" (in Sirkkunen, 2004:94). It is important for the communities to have this kind of media as well, in order to find out more what is going on in their neighbourhood.

Mansefoorumi was the place where local publicity was developed into a environment where citizen action was supported. In deviation to other parts of Mansetori, Mansefoorumi was site for the city on Tampere in whole, not just certain communities. According to Hokka et al, "this arrangement has made discussions more difficult from the start, because of the strong emotions and political views people have on wide principled questions" (in Sirkkunen, 2004:200). In addition to discussion forums, new, thematic articles and questionnaires were submitted on to the website. The intention was to create more citizen discussion on various topics. The main conclusion after the project was that even if many issues can be discussed online with the aid of ICTs, there are still some issues that need to be resolved in face-to-face meetings.

2.3. What did not work and why?

As a generalization, I would say that Mansetori has been a success in adopting and developing new ICTs for community communication. But as in all projects, this one also had some aspects that did not work as well as planned. In the following I will sum up at least some of these aspects.

2.3.1. Technological problems

In the first part of Mansetori (1998-2000) this problem was more extensive than in the second part (2001-2004). This becomes clear when one analyses the end reports of these two parts. Even if the project staff did a lot for the residents, in order to facilitate the use of new ICTs, it was still obvious that they had problems with the new technologies. Especially older, middle-aged citizens experienced problems in learning how to use a PC and the Internet. More specifically, they confronted problems in finding information on the Internet. It was easy to navigate on the Internet if one had a specific www-address. Surfing was seen more difficult if one had to remember addresses or use search engines. Also, a beginner can easily get lost on the Internet (see Kaivonen, 2002:70). After saying this, one must also remember, that this first part of the project took place in the late 90s, when the Internet was still a fairly recent phenomenon, hence the amount of information general public had about its uses and abilities was small. Hence, the citizens had to rely on the social factors e.g. other people's opinions about this new technology.

As time passed (during the second part of the project), they learned more about the systems themselves, which then facilitated the formation of their opinion about the technology. This is also concluded by Kaivonen, "most of the people that took part in the project agreed on the fact that almost everyone knows the Internet as a term, but not everyone is using it" (2002:63). The low skill level was not the only problem when it comes to new ICTs in the late 90s. There were also problems with access to this technology. Later in the project when public's skill levels went up, the need to access the Internet and other new ICTs also went up. Unfortunately the feedback from the public refers to the problem of access in the latter part of the project as well. According to Mäkinen "residents have not always had access to the publishing tools they have needed, which has been due to the project's limited resources" (in Heinonen et al, 2001:48).

In 2001, Halttu summarized the future of ICTs in the first part of the project as follows,

> "It is possible to make the tools of discussion and publishing so simple and easy to use that everyone who wants to can learn to use them. This, however, requires that equipment and software manufacturers keep a close eye on users' experiences and that they take account of these experiences in developing their technologies" (2001:120).

Basically this means that future technology should be even easier to use, and at the same time more imaginative. When it comes to community publication each community should be able to make the publication to look like them, but at the moment they cannot because of the unified, limited content formats. How about the second part (2001-2004) of Mansetori? Did the technological problems find a solution? Afraid not. Some of them persisted during the whole seven years. Saija Torniainen has been a part of a net team since spring 2002. According to her, some of the biggest problems in Mansetori has been the issues with technology. She mentions server breakdowns, and the frequent changes made in the layout resulting to multiple updatings, and the lack and high price of equipment. Also, the frequent changes within the project, and in the people in charge of the technical side have been discouraging when it comes to personal motivation. As a person with a day-job she also found the lack of time as a problem (see Sirkkunen et al, 2004:237). The project staff has noticed persisting problems also. In Sirkkunen et al they conclude, that "net projects need functioning and easy to use technology, fluent access to the net, as well as media pedagogic support especially in the beginning" (2004:6). This brings us to the other problem area of the project, the social problems. I will take a closer look at sociological problems in the following.

2.3.2. Sociological problems

As the case is in all new innovations, new ICTs have also had their problems in infiltrading into communities. Kaivonen has looked at these problems through TAM (Technology Acceptance Model). She found

that the three most important factors in accepting new technology are gained benefits, ease of use and gained pleasure. All these three factors are formed through sociological and technical agents, as for example motive. According to Halttu,

> "assuming that the knowledge and skills are there and that the equipment is in place, the most significant factor with regard to online participation is that of motivation. Motivation can compensate for shortcomings in knowledge and skills, because these can be learned if you are persistent enough" (2001:120).

In fact, through motivation one can reach the three major factors i.e. gained benefits, ease of use and gained pleasure. If the user does not feel like s/he is getting the benefits or pleasures as expected, or feels the ICT is difficult to use, it is likely that s/he will not continue using this particular ICT (see, Kaivonen 2002:45). Traditional community communication is based on face-to-face interaction. For this reason it is especially hard for older people to start using new ICTs. They do not see how it could improve their everyday life from what it is at the moment. Further more, sociological problems include the lack of time by the citizens involved. According to Mäkinen "the need to learn a great many things within a very short space of time" (2001:45) was one of the major problems.

Also, the people who up-dated the pages confronted lack of time. This was partly due to the small numbers of participants. The less people involved, the more was expected from them. Mäkinen also concludes that "there were also occasional problems and uncertainties about division of labour and responsibilities, for instance as to who was in charge of hardware acquisition and technical maintenance" (2001:45). What was especially disappointing for me to find out was that the project staff simply did not have the resources to include all the community members in the project. This becomes clear from Mäkinen's statement "the training has to start from the basics, i.e. the operating system and using the mouse. In this project we were not in the position to spend time on teaching the basics, which inevitably meant that some community members remained excluded (2001:47). This

trend is often seen in this kind of projects. The success of the projects surprises the staff and sponsors, which leads to too few resources and disappointments on the behalf of the community members. As time goes by, and as these kinds of projects become more common, I'm sure most of these technological and sociological problems will be faced and answers to them will be found.

3. NAAPURIT.NET

3.1. General description of project

3.1.1. Project background

Naapurit.net took place in the northern city of Finland called Oulu. The project was carried out basically the same way as Mansetori, but it is important to notice that naapurit.net was very much of a smaller scale project than Mansetori. According to Kumara, "just like Mansetori, naapurit.net was supposed to offer local communities resources for citizen based communication: a platform for homepages, support and training" (2004:83). This project took place between 1998 and 2004. For the first three years this project was extremely small scale, it included only one community in Oulu i.e. Raksila. In fact, the actual naapurit.net-project was started in 2001, with "The Evolution of the e-Communities"- project. Then, as the second part got launched, the intention was to encourage more parts of town to take part in it. I will look at how this goal was met later on. Fysically this project was situated in the server of Kaleva, the biggest mainstream media newspaper in the area. Later on this proved to be a mistake, since the people in Kaleva lost all of the pages and on top of that, they did not have any safety copies of them, leading to the loss of all information. It has been extremely difficult to find information on this project because of this. Unfortunately I did not have the chance to take a look at the pages while they were still running, so I can only imagine how they must have looked

like based on the material I have studied and the interview I have carried out with Ilkka Kumara, the last of the three project managers on naapurit.net. Nevertheless, it is my intention to give a full description on naapurtit.net on this part of the thesis.

3.1.2. City of Oulu

Oulu is the biggest city in northern Finland. The population of Oulu is at the moment about 128 000 people, which is not very much after all, if you compare it to, for example Tampere (about 200 000). According to www.ouka.fi (Internet source 7) "Oulu is considered northern Europe's most significant centre of competence. A significant amount of high technology ability has been concentrated in the area". One of the biggest contributors in Oulu's high technology development has been Nokia, which is educating and employing people of Oulu more and more each year.

3.1.3. Funding of project

Because of the fact that naapurit.net was a part of the "The Evolution of the e-Communities"- project, naturally, the funders of the project were the same as Mansetori's second part 2001-2004. They were Technology Agency, Alma Media, Kaleva, Oulun Puhelin, and Media Tampere.

3.2. The main goals and how they were met

First of all, before naapurit.net per se was established in 2001, a site called Raksila Online was working as the starting point for this research. Raksila Online was, like Manse communities, a neighbourhood communication site. According to Heinonen et al "this project was concerned to develop and study the technical requirements and skills needed

in citizen-oriented communication, with a local (neighbourhood) online publications created in the Internet together with community members" (2001:19). Raksila Online and its development led into naapurit.net getting started in 2001. Or, to be exact, naapurit.net was published only in Septemper of 2002, but the preparation and production of publications was started in 2001. At the time when naapurit.net was in the stage of planning, the following goals were set for it. According to Kumara, "just like Mansetori, naapurit.net was supposed to offer local communities resources for citizen based communication: a platform for homepages, support and training" (2004:83). In the following I will look at how these three goals were met.

3.2.1. A platform for homepages

Naapurit.net was situated on newspaper Kaleva's server, which gave some room for community homepages. The pages were meant to include an event calendar, history and service sections, and specific sections for youth- and association. Also, a discussion page for each community, and a flea market, which would cover the whole of the project. Technically naapurit.net differentiated from Mansetori by using different software. According to Haverinen, "since one of the project's starting points was to lower the threshold in citizen publishing, and lower the technical know-how one needed to have, it was decided that HTF-publishing system would be used in the community pages publishing" (see the interval report, 1st year). HTF i.e. HightTech Forum was developed from the ColdFusion script language, which is used in the Kaleva web pages in general. HTF has also been develop especially for this project. It makes possible so called WYSIWYG- What You See Is What You Get publishing, in which the user does not have to know so much technical details or how to code web pages by using for example HTML-code. For people who know at least something about computers, HTF is quite easy to learn (see the interval report, 1st year). Every user had the rights to work on certain parts of the pages, appointed to them by the project manager. According to Kumara "in practice it was easy to write a new story: you write a headline on its own field, and the story to its own field. After that all you had to do was to press save and publish. And

the story appears on the pages for people to read" (2004:86). So, in the beginning a platform for homepages was at hand, even with an easy enough software included.

3.2.2. Support for users

In the beginning, there were three communities in Oulu that were interested in becoming a part of naapurit.net. They were Kaakkuri, Meri-Toppila and Raksila. As we have learned before, Raksila already had their web pages set up. Now the challenge was to make them look the same with the others created. According to Haverinen, "the stand point for the pages was to look alike, in which case coherence would be achieved, but also individuality would be offered with the help of graphics and colours" (see the interval report, 1st year). The amount of support offered did not, unfortunately match the support needed. This was simply the result of non-existing funds, in other words, naapurit.net staff included one person who was not even a whole time worker. This one person was always the project manager, who had a work overload in his hands. Haverinen describes his year with naapurit.net by saying that,

> "The project has progressed slowly, and the reason for this has been the extent of the workload as well as the volunteer nature of the citizens involved. In comparison with the hours for work, this project demands a lot because of the three different webpages. It is slow to coordinate and develop three different webpages at once, but I am lucky that the schedule is not tight, but more like 'we get it done when we get it done'" (see the interval report, 1st year).

Kumara agrees with this when he states that, "it's apparent that for example two people could have concentrated more on the web page contents, as well as giving all other type of support to the users, more than one could" (2004:87).

3.2.3. Training of users

This part of the project goals correlates with the support part. The users were given training in the beginning of the project, and sometimes during the project as well, but one does not have to be a genious to realize that one person cannot be of assistance to multiple users as much as needed. Naapurit.net did work, but it could have worked better if there were more staff giving the users the training they needed in order to learn how to publish, as well as get excited about it. In the beginning, when nobody expected the huge crash of the pages, there were in fact many ideas thrown in the air on how to develop the pages further.

Like in Mansetori, people were interested in local reporters, people who would report on what is going on in the community. Also, the idea of area development update and information page was seen as an interesting addition to the pages, especially in the Suur-Koskela area. Other communities had also discussed on the possibility to create an information tool for a direct citizen effect towards the city officials (see the interval report, 1st year). According to Haverinen (before the crash), "content production should start to work on its own like it does in Mansetori, after we have trained enough people to use the publishing system. At that time we could take in new communities and start bringing them into the project" (see the interval report, 1st year). This all sounds like it should, project on its way to success. But what then happened? The crash that ended up being the death blow to this project.

3.3. What did not work and why?

Naapurit.net was an exceptional project when comparing it with Mansetori and Oppiva Ylä-Karjala, in a way that is hardly worth bragging about. By this I mean the crash of the project and the fact that there was no safety copy of the pages done, so when it crashed, most of it was lost. In the following I will take a closer look at this and other problems that arose

during the project. To be more focused and clear about what I am talking about, I will divide this chapter into two areas i.e. technical and sociological problems.

3.3.1. Technological problems

One of the smaller technical problems in naapurit.net was the rigid publishing format. On the other hand it was easy enough for everybody to use, but on the other hand it was seen as a problem by the more skilful users, who wanted to give the pages a more exiting look (Kumara, 2004:87). Naapurit.net's 'big bang' got started when somebody at Kaleva (the newspaper on who's server naapurit.net was situated) failed to show up at work for several months. This led to the fact that naapurit.net was simply forgotten from the list of sites that needed a safety copy. This immense mistake led to some virus going wild and starting to destroy the pages (see Kumara's interview). According to Kumara, "this was a bit of a bad thing because we had just built photo galleries and such, and then they just vanished and we could not get them back" (see Kumara's interview). This took place in April of 2003, just after the citizens of Lintulampi and Kaukovainio-Hiironen had adopted the pages and trying to improve them as much as they could (Kumara, 2004:85). During this project the user statistics were also destroyed (Kumara, 2004:85). The destruction of the pages was seen as a problem from the user side as well. One of the actives, Lea Salokannel, concludes that, "the worst pitfall came when the systems failed and the pages vanished right after we had seen such effort in putting them up there" (2004:89). This technical error created sociological problems for the project as well. I will take a look at these problems in the following.

3.3.2. Sociological problems

As for all of these projects, naapurit.net was also fairly well adopted by the citizens in the beginning. Every community formed a core group of about three to four people. These people were mainly from resident actives, real estate society actives and youth organization actives (Kumara,

2004:84). But as time went by, it was noticed that these people were not enough to run the site. As in all other project I have looked at, these actives simply did not have enough time to invest on this project. But in my opinion, if everything had gone smoothly, this could have been worked around in everything had gone smoothly. Unfortunately it did not. After the 'big bang' the motivation levels of these actives dropped to zero. This is understandable since they had invested so much of their free time on the project, on creating and updating the pages, and then all of a sudden it was all gone. I can imagine how they felt. It is the same if I would lose everything I have done for this theses so far. Starting all over again would not be easy, but frustrating and depressing. As Kumara concludes, "the updating of pages had cloted because of the inoperativeness, and the motivation levels of the updaters had dropped" (2004:85). Also, as I asked Kumara about the effects this project has had on the communities he concluded that, "I don't think it had any effect. Surely in the beginning there was this kind of a drive developing, but then these miserable problems came and at the end everybody had lost fait" (see Kumara's interview).

Another problem was the small amount of project staff. During the project it had four different project managers, who all needed to work alone at a time. It is simply impossible to uphold this scale project with just one employee. This has been noted by the users as well. According to Salokannel, "the frequent change of project managers has had a harmful effect. When ever one needed technical support, it was not available, so during time enthusiasm to the project has faded away" (2004:89). Once again we confront the same problem, lack of funding. In my opinion, it would be crucial to make sure that the volunteers from communities would always have all the information and help they need, available to them. This should be the number one priority in these kinds of projects. One has to take care of the volunteers, or they will gradually disappear. Before the 'big bang' there was also plans to grow the amount of communities within the project. This, of course, never happened. After the fact, it was more important to try to keep the existing community pages alive. Unfortunately this did not happen, and naapurit.net suffered a slow death.

4. OPPIVA YLÄ-KARJALA

4.1. General description of project

4.1.1. Project background

This project took place between 1998-2000 and it was conducted by the Karelian Research Institute, which has studied the development processes and the development policies in the peripheral areas very much in the near history. The task for local community networks, according to them, is "to prevent social exclusion, support social innovations, and improve services and living conditions" (Internet source 6). The concept of local community net is not in this case constructed on growth centers, but instead in focuses on smaller communities. The actions of this project aim to create new forms of co-operation, new social innovations, and mobilize unused human and social capital in a remote rural area.

4.1.2. Communities involved in project

Oppiva Ylä-Karjala, or OYK as I will refer to it from now on differs from Mansetori and naapuri.net in its target area. Whereas Mansetori focused on Tampere and naapurit.net on Oulu, which are both big cities in Finland, OYK targeted three smaller communities. In the following I will give a description of these three communities. First of the three is Nurmes, which has about 10 000 inhabitants. Second part of the research was Juuka with 7000 inhabitants, and thirdly, Valtimo with only 3000 inhabitants. What these three small communities have in common is the fact that they are all a part of poor rural area, where the persistent social problems for rural areas flourish. "The area has suffered the typical troubles of remote rural areas: a persistent high rate of unemployment, declining incomes of households in agriculture and forestry, out-migration of young people, cuts in public spending in rural services and infrastructure" (Internet source 6). The sheer small size of these communities set a challenge for the research, not to mention the aging demography of the area.

4.1.3. Project aims

The main aim for this project was to educate the local people to act within the information society and to create a "survival strategy" for the area in order for it not to become isolated from the Finnish information society (Uotinen et al 2001:39). It has been so that the remote districts of Finland have been in danger to split in two when it comes to people who know how to use computers and in other ways act in the information society. Also, the split can be seen in people in general. Some are successful in life in general and some are not. The main goal of the OYK project was to prevent these tendencies by creating new state of readiness, structures, areas of operation and the cooperation between the municipalities in the area (Uotinen et al 2001:41). According to Oksa and Turunen "other aims for the project were to create new innovations, develop the services of local residents and to build a local information net" (2000:7). According to Jukka Oksa, "all in all, the fundamental effort is that by building this kind of local information net, like it was called at the time, the future opportunities of this remote area are improved" (Oksa's interview). Apparently, since this was a project funded by Sitra, one of the aims must also have been to study local development in the information community sector, and to study how the results could be generalized to match all of Finland. I will look at project aims in more detail later in this thesis.

4.1.4. Funding of project

Oppiva Ylä-Karjala project was funded mainly by Sitra i.e. The Finnish National Fund for Research and Development. It is an independent public foundation under the supervision of the Finnish Parliament. Its activities are designed to promote the economic prosperity of the Finnish people. Sitra will focus its operations on programmes. The methods are research and training, innovative projects, business development and corporate funding. Sitra's activities are financed by the

yield from its own endowment capital and the return on its venture-capital investments. According to Oksa and Turunen Sitra decided to fund the project after the three communities i.e. Juuka, Valtimo and Nurmes had expressed their willingness to join the project in the end of 1997 and start of 1998. The specific project plan was given to Sitra in February 1998. On the 14th of March 1998 Sitra made the decision to start the project (2000:12). Other financial aid came from the three towns involved, the Northern-Karelia Labour and Trade Center (Työvoima- ja elinkeinokeskus) and a Learning Center at Nurmes that is a part of the Northern Karelia Educational Municipality Federation (koulutuskuntayhtymä) (Uotinen et al 2001:39).

4.1.5. Local Citizen Net

Before going into detail about what this term includes, it is important to clarify it a little. In Oppiva Ylä-Karjala project this term has two meanings. First of all, it is the local net which people use in order to link onto other parts of the project e.g. school net or business net. The second meaning for this term is the actual part of project called citizen net. It is a part of this project just as school net or business net. According to Oksa and Turunen "they (school-, town-, and business nets) are not separate information nets within the project, but they describe the actions of these parts of project in the joint local citizen net" (2000:17). When the user logs in to the citizen net, they find themselves from the main page. The core of the citizen net is formed by an e-mail account, and news and message boards in which local topics are discussed. Internet connection is also provided for the user. There are many different shortcuts to various topics discussed on the desktop at a time, and the user is able choose the shortcuts they want to be shown on the screen. Unfortunately, most of the users do not know how to mould the desktop, or simply are too lazy to do it. Also, the project staff is able to create new shortcuts when needed. For example before Christmas they created a site for Christmas greetings, and for the Presidential election a message board for relevant discussion was established. The user was also able to find information on many different public services like for example employment offices, police, and the social insurance institution of Finland

(KELA in finnish). The problem with these sites was that they were not regularly updated, which is of course a problem. It is common knowledge that if the user does not obtain new information from the site in a regular bases, s/he will stop visiting the site.

4.1.6. Technical Solutions

In this project, one of the key solutions was to use software that already existed instead of creating new one. This guaranteed the fast start and spread of the project. The software used was called FirstClass Client, it is well know in the United Kingdom and Ireland, where it is used mostly in Colleges and Secondary Schools. The different components that this software includes are user friendly e-mail, intranet, connection to the Internet and chat. The latter was extremely popular within the younger users in OYK. FirstClass Client is affordable which makes it a popular software for home use as well. The fact that the software works as an intranet, makes the users feel certain types of closeness with each other. This derives from such possibilities as being able to check who has read a certain message, and who is using the citizen net at the moment.

4.1.7. Education

According to Oksa and Turunen, "the success of the Oppiva Ylä-Karjala project is based on education. Two types of education were used within this project; education for the unemployed and training of basic computer skills for different groups of citizens" (2000:27). The first stop was to educate the local unemployed to use to FirstClass Client-software, who then shared this information with the local citizens. Training was organized for groups in schools and other public facilities. House calls by the instructors were also very common, since they were free for the citizens. During these house calls they were first taught how to use the software, and later helped with possible problems.

4.1.8. Kiosks

All together 33 computer kiosks were established during the project. Most of them were situated in Nurmes (18), Juuka had nine and Valtimo six. The amount of the kiosks correlate directly with the size of the communities. The kiosks were established in public facilities such as shops, banks, post offices, restaurants and travel offices. The aim of the project was to reach all citizens of the communities. For this reason the kiosks were also established in local organizations, in which people easily experience social exclusion, e.g. the unemployed, elderly, part of the youth. A couple of kiosks were also found in local businesses.

4.1.9. School Net

Each year during the project specific fourth grade classes were selected as targets for the project. They were then taught how to use computers and especially the OYK-intranet. The aim in the training of children was to teach them how to use e-mail, how to find information on the net (both intra- and Internet), and to teach them the rules of conduct when surfing the net. The key to success for school net was to get the teachers interested and active. This was acknowledged early in the project, and the teachers were offered support and help for free during the project.

4.1.10 Town Net

When the town net was developed, the core idea for it was that the citizens would have a chance to influence in the town's political field more than they did at that moment. Unlike before, the citizens would actually get involved with the decision making *before* the final decisions were intact. According to Oksa and Turunen "very often the towns obey the minimum principle when it comes to informing its citizens. They only

inform them as much as is required by law" (2000:33). The idea was to bring all the town meeting documents and records to the citizen net, but this was done properly only in the town of Valtimo, where the politicians were most active within this project. I will look at the success and failures of this and other parts of the project later on in this thesis.

4.1.11. Business Net

The OYK project aimed to activate not only the citizens, but also the businesses in the local area. A business net was created for the citizens to find services in the local area more easily. Business net included a list of local businesses and links to their own web pages. Again, this will be looked at more closely later on.

4.1.12 The Marketing Unit

Basically, what the marketing unit was meant to do, according to Oksa and Turunen "was to build marketing strategies for travel companies and create marketing and translation units. The project was also meant to sell office services for the business clients" (2000:38). This part of the project was most unsuccessful.

4.2. The main goals and how they were met

The most important goal for this project was to create new ways for citizens to take part in the information society at hand, and to give everyone a chance to learn how to use computers for communication. In this chapter I will look at how this, and other goals set for this project, worked out. For this I will use the material gained from Jukka Oksa's interview and from some literature.

4.2.1. Creation of means

It is obvious that for a project like this it is vital to ensure that there is a sufficient amount of computers in use, since the whole project is based on the use of an intra- and Internet. One of the goals for this project was to ensure that every citizen on the area has a possibility to log on as often as they want, even if they did not own a computer. In order to achieve this goal, computer kiosks were established. In fact, these kiosks were originally an idea created by the project financier, SITRA. At the end of the project there were all together 33 computer kiosks in the area, and they were extremely popular. Especially school children were frequent users. They used the computer kiosks as well as the computers in schools. The start of a school net was another way to get the attention of the children. In one of the following chapters I will look at how successful the school net has been. After the computer kiosks were established, it was important to teach people how to use the software within them. In the following I will take a look at how this part of the project was taken care of and how successful it was.

4.2.2. Local Educators

What was interesting for this project, was the fact that the learning process got started from the grass root level. The project managers trained two groups of local unemployed people to use the software and computers in general. The education started from the very basic computer skills. The idea was that these people would then go and teach the citizens how to use computers. According to Oksa this worked out better than expected "from this comes the education innovation, as they called it, the close instructor (lähikouluttaja in finnish)…for the locals they were like the girl/boy next door. Somebody who knows their situation, knows their problems, talks the same dialect with them and does not use computer language" (Oksa's interview). This method worked out extremely well. The end result was that there were active users in all age groups, including senior citizens. What is also extremely important to know is that these local

educators found a new way to make their living through the project. The main financier of OYK, Sitra, started a new business called "Karelian Netfellows Oy" in the beginning of the project. In the start this business was given start up money by Sitra, but later on developed into its own enterprise. This kind of a business is definitely very useful now that the Information Society has reached Upper Karelia as well. Karelian Netfellows offers to its clients computer services, the planning, building and upholding of the nets, office services, education services and also Internet and intranet-services. This business employed the local unemployed who took part in the project, and what is the main thing, Karelian Netfellows still exists after the project itself has finished.

4.2.3. Multiple different topics to discuss

Another reason for the success of this project was the fact that there was a wide range of topics to discuss. The front page of the intranet would offer topics like flea market, congratulations page for special days, gardening, a site where people could post for example poems they have written etc. In my opinion this is one of the ways of creating local community. It is extremely important for people to discuss topics that are important to them, local issues. And if some people did not want to participate in the discussions, they were still given a chance to read what other people had to say about things. According to Oksa "it opened new forums for the local activists, who then became net celebrities in both good and bad. They had their own audience who was expecting for their comments. The normal problem was that there were only a few activists and then more passive followers" (Oksa's interview). The fact that this project offered many interesting topics to discuss had a straight influence on the number of users. According to Oksa and Turunen the growth in user numbers has been more rapid than was expected in the original plan. "When the project ended on March 31st 2000, the amount of users was 5225. This is 25,1% of the population in Upper Karelia" (2000:20).

4.2.4. How well the different nets were adopted by the citizens?

As I have explained before, there were different nets incorporated into this project. These nets were local citizen net, school net, town net, business net and the marketing unit. In the following I will take a look at how the local citizens used these nets in order to build and reinforce the local community.

The local citizen net was the backbone of this project. It held within many different topics for people to discuss. It was also an efficient channel for the public to inform each other on varient topics. The core of the citizen net was access to e-mail and the Internet. This is what the citizens used, especially in the beginning of the project, most often. Later on, when citizens' computer skill enhanced and interest towards the project grew, the intranet became very popular as well. The citizen net had also its own folders for different political parties and some public services, but unfortunately these folders were not very well updated, so in the end they were not as visited as it was hoped in the beginning. One of the reasons why the folders were not as updated as was hoped for was the fact that all of these public services and political parties already had their own sites on the Internet. The Internet sites were more used and better updated through out the project. Some minor flaws were to be seen in the citizen net as well, one of them being the structure of the net. According to Oksa and Turunen "for example the business links and the flea market should be found under the same path. This could attract private users to pay a visit in the business sites more often" (2000:18). Another problem with this project was the fact that since it was extremely popular, the technical solutions failed every now and then. This was due to the problems in dialing (also known as ringdown), some modems and the server. It has to be said, though, that the server was changed before the end of the project, but the other problems persisted.

The success of the school net was very important for the project, because of the fact that school children are definitely the most active and massive group of users in this (and also many other similar) project. In

order to gain many children as users, the project "adopted" a 4th grade class from every school in the local area. These children were taught how to use the local net, the Internet, and e-mail. Also, the schools were connected via intranet, so communication over community lines was very easy. The project educators taught computer skills to teachers as well as students, and if at any time a teacher needed help in teaching or support with technical matters, the local educator would offer assistance. The success of the school net correlates straight to the interest level of the teachers. If they found this project and computer skills in general to be an important and interesting topic, which the children should learn, the project was a success. Unfortunately some teachers did not find computer skills to be relevant, which led to poor success of the school net in that school. Also, another problem for schools was the small amount of computers at hand. Children had to wait for their turn and in some cases this lowered the learning motivation. But those who started to use the intranet and e-mail actively found many interesting areas in it. Especially the chat was popular among the children. Also, what made the school net a success was the fact that children made new friends outside their local community. In other words, the creation of the three-community-link worked out perfectly among the youngsters.

The idea behind town net was that it would be a channel for the local politicians to inform the citizens on what is going on with the town, what projects are being planned and what are already being carried out. One of the main ways to do this would be to transform all the records from town meetings into an electric form and to post them on the town net. Unfortunately, this part of the project did not work out as well as planned. There are many reasons for this. First of all, Juuka, Valtimo and Nurmes are typical Finnish towns when it comes to informing. The general opinion within towns is that the citizens will do just fine with a minimum amount of information. In fact, the only town, which took whole advantage of this project was Valtimo. They built a web site for the town around this project. All the computer services needed, they purchased from the Karelian Netfellows Oy. From this one can see that Valtimo's needs, and possibilities offered by the project have met (in Oksa and Turunen, 2000:34). But why

were the other towns (Juuka and Nurmes) so cautious to get involved in the town net? Oksa and Turunen list three reasons for this. First of all, the town net does not reach all the citizens of the town, so other ways of media would also be necessary. Town net could be one of the ways to inform people, but not the only way, since not all people still have access on the town net. Another important factor for towns was the permanence of the net. The net would have to be permanently in the use of citizens, not only for the duration of the project. Thirdly, only a small number of town decision makers take part in the citizen net. One of the reasons being that one needs to have good writer's skills in order to publish on the net (in 2000:34). Apparently many of the local politicians did not. It should also be noted that towns, which use electronic sources for informing citizens, already have web pages, which makes this kind of a project obsolete to them. As a conclusion for the town net I would say that it would have worked better if there would have been more active town politicians. The towns were given a brilliant tool to work with and to get closer to the public, but they more or less ignored it. One can only hope that as time goes by and as electronic communication becomes an everyday thing for us, the towns will also take part in the creation of electronic local community.

The idea for the business net was fairly simple. Businesses from close and far were listed on the net, where one could find links to their web pages. Other information on the businesses was also offered. The goal was to create electronic trade within the local area. This goal was not reached. There were only two groups of businesses that gained something from the business net. Firstly the local businesses gained some trade because of the business net, but not as much as was expected. Second group to benefit from the business net was the local computer suppliers. Since the project got started and people started to buy all the equipment they needed, these local stores sales grew instantly. Problems with the business net were obvious. Small companies did not want to invest on it, because they do not have time to develop new marketing procedures. They simply thought that the time spent on education and development was time away from the actual sales event, from which the companies get the profit they so badly need. Another problem with the business net was the fact that most businesses

want an Internet address, which is easy to remember, for example sampo.fi. These types of addresses were not available within this project, instead they would have to use the ending -oyk.pkky.fi, which is extremely difficult to remember. One should also remember that for businesses the name aspect is also an image aspect (Oksa and Turunen, 2000:36). As the project was half way through, an assessment was done on its progress. At this point it was seen that the business net and the marketing unit were not doing as well as expected. The project employees decided to use more resources on these two aspects of the project, but soon realized that it was not worth it, so instead the resources were targeted on aspects that were on a good speed i.e. local citizen net and further education for the citizens.

There were some big plans for the marketing unit. The local people were hoping that the local businesses would grab on to this opportunity to use electronic marketing, and that more working from home would be one of the results of the marketing unit. Unfortunately, none of these goals set were reached. The businesses did not get excited about this new opportunity in marketing, and none of the working from home visions came true. In one aspect this part of the project did work, though. Even though there were no jobs created where you could work from home, the project educators' services were sold to local businesses. For example a bank wanted to educate its staff on computer skills, and the education was ordered from the project educators. So in this respect the creation of new jobs has worked.

4.2.5. Community isolation

One of the main goals for OYK was to hinder these three communities from isolation. As I have explained before, they are all small, rural communities which started to die through such social problems as aging demography, unemployment, decline of forestry and agriculture and cuts in public spending in rural services and infrastructure. This starting point certainly gave the project coordinators a major challenge in order to stop isolation. But this challenge was met, in my opinion, extremely well.

The project coordinators managed to create a functional intranet, educate the local citizens on how to use it, and some people were also taught how to *teach* computers in general, and most importantly, create new hope of tomorrow within the community. As Oksa puts it, "the general conception about the communities future and possibilities changed. The reputation of the towns changed crucially, and reflected to the citizens view on their own town's possibilities" (Oksa's interview). In this view, the self-esteem of the communities grew enormously, but to answer the question about isolation, I would argue that this goal was achieved partly. I think so because, yes, it is true that the citizens in this area were given the opportunity to join the information society through the creation of means (i.e. computers) and ways (i.e. education). They were taught how to use the Internet and e-mail, the two tools which definitely are a big part of information society in practise, and which were a way to fight the isolation. But at the same time an intranet was created, making the local communities more strongly bound, making that specific part of Finland more important to the users. In this way, the local people were enhancing the isolation, when they thought "this is our thing, only for us", they isolated themselves from the rest of the world. To conclude, I think this project did both, it created new ways for people to experience the outside world through the Internet, but at the same time it reinforced the idea of themselves as isolated communities, which are close to each other within themselves.

4.3. What did not work and why?

In this chapter I will clarify what were the goals that were not met during the project, and what were some of the unforeseen problems the project coordinators had to face during the project. Even if the end result was excellent, there were some problems during the two year cycle.

4.3.1. Co-operation with different parties

During the project it became obvious to the project employees that not all the parties who were included in the project actually

wanted to work in order to make things work. There were some teachers who did not get excited about the school net (not even when some other schools tried to get in touch about the project), some town officials and politicians who did not think the town net was appropriate, and that the citizens should be given more power over the decision making process. Also, some (or should I say most) businesses that were asked to come along to the project were less than enthusiastic to take part in it. Understandably they had to think about the business itself, and what were the resources they had, and in fact, if they had any extra resources to use in this project in the first place. A lot of them did not, which is understandable, since we are now talking about small businesses.

4.3.2. Technical solutions

During the process it became obvious that the technical solutions were not the best possible for this project. The connections kept failing every now and then which turned away some users. Also, the connection was very slow at times. It was partly to do with the fact that a modem was used, and partly because of network traffic. But again, I need to emphasize that in general, this part worked out very well considering that the goal amount of users was 1500 and there ended up being over 5000 users within the OYK project!

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter I will look at how these new ICTs have influenced community communication. What were the similarities in these three project, what did they contribute to the communities involved and what does the future look like in the area of incorporating the ICTs to the communities. I will also clarify once more why this thesis was written. I will look at what were the geographical differences on how the projects worked out and what community spirit could be at its best. I will also discuss the possibility of new ICTs replacing face-to-face communication in communities.

5.1. Similarities in the projects

All of these three projects had similar problems and also similar successes. One of the biggest problems was met in the field of technology. Before discussing this any further, one must remember that all of these projects got started in the late 90s, when technology was not what it is today. The Internet was still a fairly new phenomenon, and home computers were not as popular as today. Also, technology itself has improved immensely.

The biggest problems with technology were encountered by Naapurit.net. After hard work web pages were finally set up and running, when the disaster struck. As we have learned from earlier chapters in this thesis, this destruction could not be overcome, and Naapurit.net became history a lot earlier as expected. Mansetori and OYK experienced also some technical problems (e.g. problems with dialing, computer blackouts etc.), but they were dealt with and the projects were kept alive. Some problems were also seen in the design of the web pages. More experienced users would have wanted more versatile publishing tools in order to make the pages look more exiting, but the projects used very simple tools. This was the case simply because these new ICTs were still very unfamiliar to most of the users, and there was not enough time to teach them anything more sophisticated. This brings us to another similar problem all of these projects had i.e. lack of time and volunteers.

Again, Naapurit.net had the worst of this. When Mansetori and OYK attracted volunteers in average seven people per community, Naapurit.net had only a few people working on one community's website. And when you keep in mind that all these volunteers had their personal life to take care of as well, the lack of time was inevitable. The workload these volunteers were put under was simply too much. But on the other hand, it must be noticed that those volunteers who did participate, were quite active. And the more help they received from the project staff, the more enthusiastic they became in order to create nice web pages for their community. One

more problem that comes to mind when thinking about these three projects was (as it often is in all projects) lack of funding. For OYK this problem was not such big scale, because they received the funding from SITRA. In fact, when you compare OYK and another project I have referred to i.e. Nettimaunula, you see that both of these projects were funded by SITRA, and both of them can be categorized as successes. Hence, the amount of funding has a straight effect on how the projects succeed. More money brings more equipment, more staff, which then instead creates the sensation of credibility among the users. On the other end of the scale is Naapurit.net, which had one person in its staff during the whole project. And what was especially disturbing for the users, was the fact that this one person changed two times during the project. Nevertheless, problems were not the only consequence that followed these projects. They also contributed quite a lot of positive aspects to community communication, and community spirit in general. In the following I will look at these positive consequences more closely.

5.2. What did these projects give to the communities?

I have, during this thesis, divided failures and successes into technological and sociological. In this chapter I will continue doing the same. First of all, I will look at the success of these projects within the communities from the technological point of view. The most obvious positive thing that communities gained from these projects was the technology itself. Every community involved was given many new computers and Internet connections. It is also worth noticing that the computers used in these projects had many different programmes in them, which made the computers even more valuable and versatile. It is obvious that without this technology these projects could not have been carried out. It is also worth noticing that when these projects took off, especially in the OYK area, local computer suppliers' sales grew quite a bit. It is needless to say how much this kind of a boost in the local business meant for these poor areas. But the technology was not the only thing that made these projects to work. There were also many sociological factors that became obvious during the projects.

First of all, when the users learnt new skills, their self-esteem and image improved. This is only natural, to feel good about yourself when you succeed in something. And what makes it even better is the fact that there are other people close to you who have succeeded in the same thing. This feeling created the spirit of togetherness and community. For example, if you see people on the street, you might know them to be living in your neighbourhood, but you never talk to them (not in the Finnish culture, anyway). This project gave the people in these communities a chance to communicate face-to-face while doing something good for the neighbourhood i.e. creating the web pages or writing news articles about their everyday life. According to Lehtonen, Mansetori has not created community per se, but supported and reinforced its spirit.

Also, in addition of meeting the people from your own neighbourhood, people have also had a chance to meet people from other communities while creating these projects. In other words, people have created new social networks while volunteering for these projects. This was apparent especially in Mansetori, where people from different communities gathered to organize and plan the pages. Also, in OYK this aspect became obvious when the young people from the three different communities were granted access to a chat room. Within the young people, this chat room created a three-community-link, which turned out to be a success. But the community spirit did not improve only in the face-to-face meetings among the volunteers, but also within the project users themselves. People finally had a chance to read local on-line journalism and communicate on a grass root level. In my opinion, two specific factors made these projects a success. First of all, on-line journalism and the local grass root communication were exactly that, local. People could talk about things important to them, and read articles about topics close to them. This, if anything, creates the sense of togetherness and community.

Another thing that I see important for the success of the project was the fact that information moved quickly. Unlike in newspapers articles, you did not have to wait for the publishing date anymore, but instead you could write your opinion on the discussion board and see it there

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in seconds. Intra-community reporting gained speed and was brought out to public. This was one of the goals achieved in these projects. One other success story for these projects was the fact that local people became what one might call "net celebrities". Especially in OYK and in Mansetori, there were certain people who wrote on-line articles very actively. These people gained a group of followers who waited anxiously to read more of their favourite writer's writings. There are also two factors in OYK that I have to give especial credit for.

First of all, the project employed unemployed people to work for the project. This was one way to improve the social status of the communities, and in fact the whole of Finland. Another thing that OYK deserves credit for is the fact that it was a safe environment for local children to interact in. The parents could let their children use intranet without fear of things you might confront on the Internet e.g. child and other type of pornography, violence, and other harmful information for the children. And also, this intranet, including the chat room, had certain norms and rules. If the user broke these rules, their access was denied for a certain period of time as a punishment. This way of teaching children, and in fact users as a whole is in my opinion a brilliant solution, which should be applied more. As a conclusion, I would argue that these projects gave a lot to the communities. Some more than others, but in general, I think, the projects succeeded in incorporating information society to the communities. What about the future of these types of projects, and community communication as a whole? This I will take a look at in the following.

5.3. How to continue from here?

Now that the merging process of the new ICTs to the local communities has begun, it is time to think about the future. What can we do differently in order to make these types of projects to work even better in the future? What details should we take into consideration? Or should we even continue using ICT in community communication? According to the people I interviewed for this thesis, we should definitely continue using ICTs in

community communication. Oksa emphasizes the importance of planning. According to him ICTs should be used, but only when necessary. One should plan the research project first in order to find out the real needs of the community, instead of acquiring all the equipment (i.e. computers and other technology) first and then starting to plan the project (see interview). Each project should be a unique one, manufactured for that specific community.

Another point of view comes from Kumara. He also sees that we should continue using ICTs in community communication, but he has questions about who the project leader should be. For example, Kaleva had a brilliant opportunity in Naapurit.net, to start creating more active web site for themselves, and then link it to Naapurit.net, but they did not use this opportunity (see interview). Lehtonen agrees with Oksa and Kumara, that ICTs add value to community communication. Lehtonen wants to emphasize the fact that ICTs are only an alternative, a good addition to traditional communication. According to her, the Internet is a good tool for informing and keeping in touch. Also, it creates new possibilities to influence. For example town officials are more approachable via e-mail than telephone. It is good to keep in mind that ICTs develop in a fast pace. What should also be a part of this development process is the interviewing of the users. As we have found, some users were not happy about the technology itself. It was too easy and rigid for some and too difficult for others. In order to create the best possible technology, it has to be user friendly and easy to use, but at the same time imaginative and variable for the more skilful users.

I do believe that as time goes by, this technology will be very sophisticated, because at the moment we are raising a computerized generation. These days it is the children who know most about new technologies, as their parents are only now learning how to use the Internet. In a few decades, today's children are grown ups, and extremely skilful with technologies. At that point ICTs in community communication, in my opinion, will be more of a matter of course than an exception. This simply, because the users at the time see ICTs as such an easy tool to use. In the time between that particular picture of the future and now, what should be focused on is the development of technology and also the education and

guidance of the users. It is vital to add resources on these aspects of community communication. These resources should come from the government, as well as the private sector. I do think that businesses and other quarters of the private sector are more aware of new ICTs now than what they were when these projects were initiated in the late 90s. This gives a good starting point for the future development.

5.4. Final words

Local communities, at their best, are full of commitment. An arena where people work and learn together, help each other and take care of each other. This is the type of community that has been the norm during the agrarian and industrial society. During post-modernity, societies turned into individuality emphasizing. This is when, as I have quoted Schuler before, the notion of community diminished from what it used to be in earlier societies. Now, that we have moved on to information society era, this notion of traditional community has become more significant in the sociological discussion. We are living a critical period, because new ways of communication are being introduced to societies. One can only hope that these new ICTs can enhance the importance of community communication the way they are meant to do. In this thesis I have shown how this process of creating new types of on-line communities has begun, and also given ideas on how to develop this favourable development. It will be interesting to see where we are in a few decades when it comes to community communication.

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Interviews:

Interviews with Ilkka Kumara, Pauliina Lehtonen and Jukka Oksa are available with the thesis' writer Inga Ärnfors (inga.arnfors@jippii.fi).