

Information Navigation in the City - the Helsinki case



The study is part of the EU-funded FIREBALL project, in which cities and other organisations around Europe seek out their own and shared paths towards smarter operating practices.



FIREBALL establishes a coordination mechanism through which a network of Smart Cities across Europe engages in long term collaboration for adopting User Driven Open Innovation to explore the opportunities of the Future Internet. The coordination process will be grounded in exchange, dialogue and learning between Smart Cities, who are considered as key demand-side drivers of Future Internet innovation. It also will be grounded in bringing together the Future Internet, Living Labs and Smart Cities constituencies.

In Helsinki, a smart city is considered first and foremost to be based on the smartness of the people of the urban community. Enabling the participation of the people is the key for a city to evolve in to a smart city. The report shows what 'smart city' means in Helsinki. The report is based on interviews carried out in the municipal organisation and city community as well as a charting of the city's information system descriptions.

The report by **Kim Viljanen, Antti Poikola, Pekka Koponen** contains interviews to the following key people in Helsinki:

Pekka Sauri, Deputy Mayor in charge of Public Works and Environmental Affairs, City of Helsinki

Markku Raitio, IT Director, City of Helsinki

Ari Andersin, Project Manager, Enterprise Architecture, City of Helsinki

Mirjam Heikkinen, Project Manager, Facility Register and Service Map, City of Helsinki

Matti Nikupeteri, Engineer, Building Regulation Department, Urban Landscape Unit, City of Helsinki

Otso Kivekäs, Member of the Public Works Committee, City of Helsinki

Jaakko Lehtonen, Dodo ry, for an eco-efficient city
Pirjo Tulikukka, Executive Director, Helsinki Neighbourhoods Association
Teppo Moisio, Reporter, Helsingin Sanomat
Petri Aukia, Managing Director, Codento Oy

Read the whole report [here](#).

Foreword by Mayor Jussi Pajunen, City of Helsinki

The model of local democracy as we know it today is undergoing a fundamental transformation which will shake the foundations of our society. In a way, we are actually returning to the origins of the rule of the people; to the Greek and Roman city states, where informed members of the communities gathered to debate and decide on important matters.

For centuries we have distanced ourselves from this ideal. This development has, of course, occurred as a very natural consequence of the evolvement of the everyday lives and obligations of citizens. It would not be very practical to summon all the Helsinkians to the Senate Square to decide about the next year's budget.

Nevertheless, we now have the tools to do this virtually. In terms of city operations, the breakthrough of ICT has probably led to the greatest change in our way to work ever. However, until now ICT has been mostly perceived as a convenient tool just to carry out the duties as before. What I mean is that ICT has been glued on the existing structure, without reflecting on how it should be changed as a result of the new available technology. Only now are we entering a phase where computers and applications are really changing the ways we work. This is what I understand defines a Smart City ? a whole new approach and level of ambition in combining information, communication and technology.

At present, we have an abundance of digital sources available just by a mouse-click, not to mention public libraries and other information services. Though, we still face several challenges in exploiting them in practice. For the average citizen, it requires great efforts to map out available sources and to learn how to access them ? not to mention the challenge of processing and interpreting the information.



The norm of the Nordic society model has always been openness. Limitations on disclosure have been an exception and have required an explicit legal basis. Nonetheless, publicity of documents and accessibility to them are by no means congruent terms. Irrelevant of the principle of openness, special efforts have been required to attain official documents. Often this would involve a visit at the registrar's office of a specific department.

Herein lies the great revolution: information and technology in ICT have previously existed separately. Communication has mostly been one-way, going from the administration to the people.

Thanks to the new way of thinking, it will be possible to easily access virtually all data that may be disclosed as such in digital format. To illustrate my point, I will use the new information management system of Helsinki, Ahjo, as an example. All pending matters are registered and drafted in a citywide database. The different stages in the decision-making process add new information such as reports and statements from officials, departments and committees. Nearing the end of this cycle, there is an extensive amount of information concentrated in one digital system.

Now let us envisage that this information is made available to everyone through a web interface. In my visions all this information will be available to everyone, from the moment when the preparation process is launched within the city. Just imagine the vast opportunities for think tanks and residents' associations to present their own proposals regarding, for example, a new city planning

project or the development of basic services in a certain district and make an important contribution to the official preparation procedure by providing an additional viewpoint. Participatory budgeting is another exciting possibility. That being said, we are facing not only a groundbreaking paradigm shift in terms of openness, but regarding our entire democratic model and empowerment. It will shake the foundations of our present way of working and the way that we perceive local democracy today.

Read the whole report [here](#).

Download the Helsinki case working group presentation ([ppt](#), 3,4 Mb)

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