

Communication Networks and Local Services, Upper Karelia Experience

DESERVE Meeting 21.1.05

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The crucial question

- How to create a good local network system?
- Which will
 - Strengthen the civil society
 - Increase social capital of the region
 - Increase the survival possibilities of the rural and remote regions

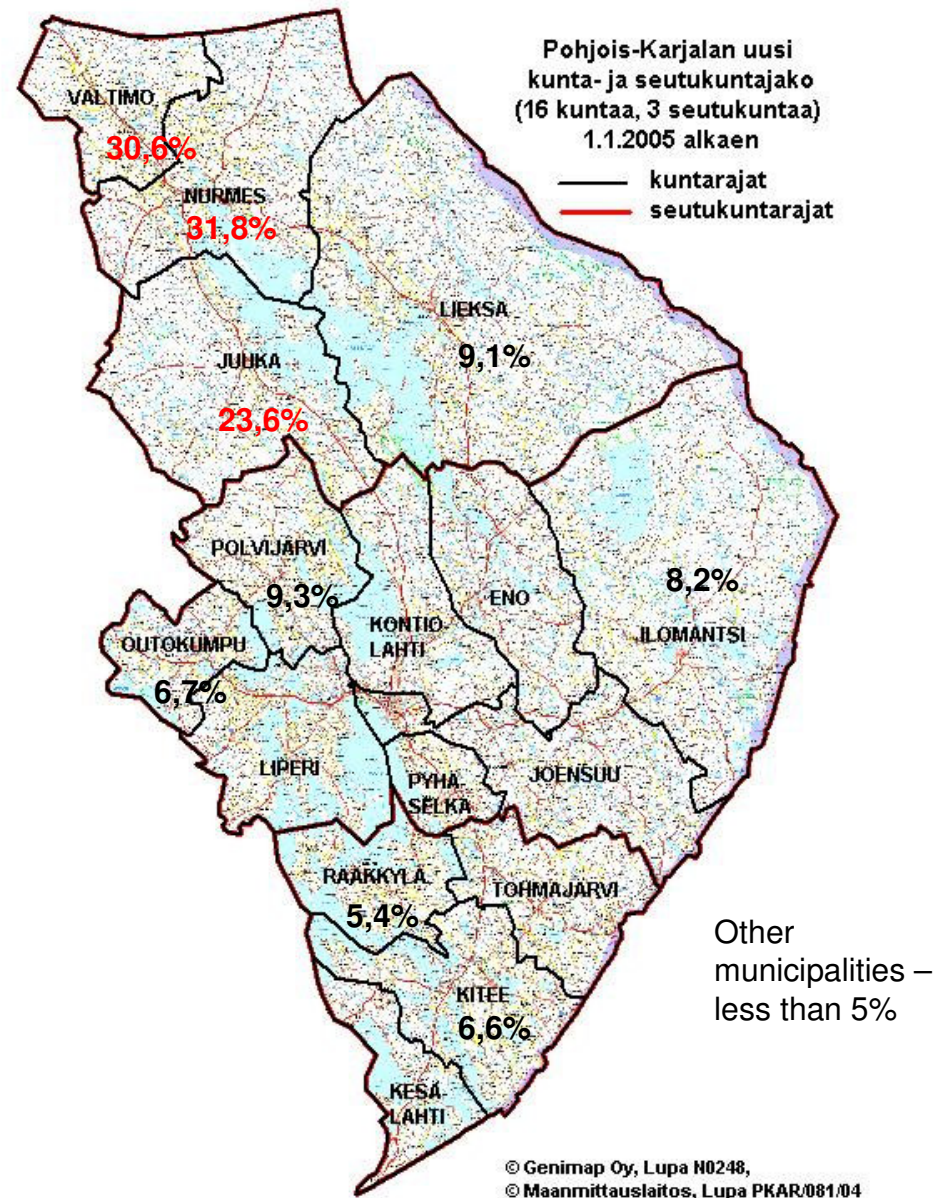
Our solution (1998-)

- Dense network of free of charge intranet/internet kiosks (possibilities for all)
- System of “layman trainers” (knowledge for all)
- Local intranet system which is closely connected to Email (need for use)

Local Intranet system

- Local virtuality (intranet) => non-anonymity
 - Your “official” email = your “local virtual identity” and “membership card” in local intranet
- Global virtuality (Internet)=> anonymity
- Easy to use and administer system
- Usable with all kind of connection speeds (and types)
- Stable, safe and high usability

- Original region (1998-) Nurmes, Juuka, Valtimo –
- Gradual enlargement by three different projects (2000-2004)
- Present situation:
- In Upper Karelia 10,7% of total population, 53,7% of the users of the network



Lessons

- We need different approaches for local sphere (different from national/global networking solutions)
- Users are conservative and they use only a small proportion of (technical) possibilities
- To survive after special project based financing is a real challenge for networks in sparsely populated regions

Searching for answers to survive

- New possibilities of Wlan combined with local Intranet solution
- New kind of “total connectivity” concept
 - Attractive broad band solution for those who want to pay monthly for connection
 - Free or almost free narrow band connection as a basic service for all

The basic citizen rights of the Information Society

- Global and local electronic connectivity
 - free narrow band connection as basic right
 - availability of reasonably priced broad band connection
- Membership and "virtual identification card" for the local eCommunity (email)

Local networks and local identity?

(reflecting Finnish situation)

- Village-Municipality-Region-County-Nation
- Need for re-organisation and re-thinking (because of diminishing population)
- Is it possible to create new regional identities with the help of local networks?
- When the physical distances between people increase, would it possible to compensate the development by “virtual meeting places” and “virtual democratic participation”?