

The name of the project:

Hyperlocal publishing – new forms of local media

The year the grant was awarded: 2016

The sum of the grant: 100 000 €

The starting date of the project: 1.1.2017

The ending date of the grant: 28.2.2018

Other financing received for the project: -

Researcher in charge:

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Other researchers of the project:

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Several research assistants, hired by the project or SSKH, and journalism students have also participated in the project.

Summary

The project examines the emergence of hyperlocal media in Finland as a part of larger transformation of Finnish news media and journalism. The development of hyperlocal media is examined quantitatively and qualitatively. In the empirical analysis, the focus was set on initiatives, which have emerged during 2000s. However, the existence of older and established forms of local media were also taken into account. A large empirical data have been gathered and created for the study. The research material consists of quantitative and qualitative data. The data collection started with phone calls to all Finnish municipalities to gather information about the sources for local news, and the existence of hyperlocal publications. The phone interviews were complemented with internet searches. The data set was further complemented with an Internet based survey for the hyperlocal publications and qualitative theme interviews with the makers of selected hyperlocal initiatives. The ten persons interviewed represented nine cases of hyperlocal operations. The data gathered includes also two discussion workshops with representatives of media start-ups and industrial partners. The workshops, arranged at the University of Helsinki, concerned the definition of hyperlocal media, strategies and business possibilities for hyperlocal.

We have found that the hyperlocal field in Finland is inherently diverse and emerging at a leisurely pace. We found approximately 30 hyperlocal publications active in 2017. In line with previous studies, Finnish hyperlocal media originate online, pertain to geographically defined communities and aim to fill perceived gaps in local news and information sharing, as well as discussion. The study also shows that “hyperlocal publishing” is a wide notion; the content published can vary from news to genres that are not traditionally seen as journalism, such as baking recipes, personal blog postings and native advertising. Accordingly, it is not easy to classify the publications to some clearly defined groups. Not only contents but also their goals, makers, practices and business models vary a lot. An association or a society publishes most new hyperlocal publications. Often, a municipality or city council is involved, and there are some EU-funded projects. Minority of hyperlocal initiatives are published by a company or private persons. Amateur or voluntary background characterizes many of the Finnish cases. Most of the production teams consist of the amateurs or "enthusiasts", while there only a few semi-professional operations. Hyperlocal initiatives typically aim at contributing to developing local grassroots reporting since they see that the local media scene is weak or the level of reporting low. A challenge is the financial sustainability. Majority of hyperlocal media included in the study lacked business goals and had problems with profitability.

The aim of the project

The aim of the project is to explore the emergence of new kind of local, hyperlocal, media. As regards the forms of hyperlocal media, the aim is to examine to what extent and where hyperlocal media is emerging in Finland, how the initiatives can be characterized and how they contribute to and reflect wider changes in Finnish media ecosystem.

Fulfilment of the aim (scale 1–5):

According to the self-evaluation of the team, the aims were achieved excellently (5).

Research data gathered and created within the project

The study can be characterised as multi-method research. Research data gathered and created includes:

- Phone calls (interviews) to all Finnish municipalities to gather information about the sources for local news, and the existence of hyperlocal publications, complementary data gathering, e.g. internet searches
- Internet based survey for the hyperlocal publications
- Qualitative theme interviews (10) with the makers of selected hyperlocal initiatives
- Discussion workshops (2) with representatives of media start-ups and industrial partners
- Online map: <https://blogs.helsinki.fi/hyperlokaali/2017/12/21/missa-kaikki-suomen-hyperlokaalit-mediat-sijaitsevat/> and database regarding this media.

At the current phase, **the research material has been stored** in the data archives of the University of Helsinki (SSKH).

Scientific publications, articles and popular texts

The project published announcements in an openly available blog (<https://blogs.helsinki.fi/hyperlokaali/>). The blog was also used for sharing results and giving a possibility for readers to comment, and propose new information on hyperlocal publications.

Lehtisaari, Katja, Hujanen Jaana, Grönlund Mikko and Lindén Carl-Gustav (forthcoming 2018/2019) Emerging forms of hyperlocal media. The case of Finland. *Nordicom Review* Special Issue Hyperlocal media in the Nordic region.

Lindén, Carl-Gustav, Hujanen Jaana and Lehtisaari Katja (Guest Editors) (Forthcoming 2018/2019): *Nordicom Review* Special Issue Hyperlocal media in the Nordic region. <http://www.nordicom.gu.se/sv/aktuellt/nyheter/call-papers-nordicom-review-special-issue-0>.

Hujanen, Jaana, Lehtisaari Katja, Grönlund, Mikko and Lindén Carl-Gustav (forthcoming). Mapping and Defining Hyperlocal Media in Finland. A manuscript submitted to *Digital Journalism*.

Zilliacus, Henrika (2018/2019) Expanding or diversifying the definition of journalism? Implications of a local case study from an editorial and an audience perspective. *Nordicom Review*, Special issue Hyperlocal media in the Nordic region. Submitted/forthcoming.

Several manuscripts are currently being written based on the papers presented in scientific conferences (see below).

Presentations in scientific conferences

- Lehtisaari, Katja, Hujanen, Jaana, Grönlund Mikko and Lindén Carl-Gustav (2017) Presentation *New Forms of Hyperlocal Media in Finland*, Nordmedia conference, University of Tampere 17.8.2017
- Zilliacus, Henrika (2017) Presentation *Case Lauttasaari – Old and New Hyperlocal Media on an Island*, Nordmedia conference, University of Tampere 17.8.2017.
- Hujanen, Jaana, Lehtisaari Katja, Linden Carl-Gustav and Grönlund Mikko (2017) Two international panels on hyperlocal media, Nordmedia conference, University of Tampere 17.8.-18.8.2017.
- Hujanen, Jaana, Lehtisaari Katja, Grönlund, Mikko and Lindén Carl-Gustav (2017) Presentation *Mapping and Defining Hyperlocal Media in Finland*, The Future of Journalism: Journalism in a post-truth age –conference, 14.9.2017. Cardiff University.
- Hujanen, Jaana, Lehtisaari Katja, Grönlund Mikko and Lindén Carl-Gustav (2018) Presentation *Hyperlocal – Characteristics, Challenges and Hopes* Median ja viestinnän tutkimuksen päivät, 28.4.2018, University of Jyväskylä.
- Hujanen, Jaana, Lehtisaari Katja, Grönlund Mikko and Lindén Carl-Gustav (2018) Presentation *Business Models, Audiences and Sustainability. Characteristics of Finnish Hyperlocal Publishing*, World Media Economics and Management Conference 6.-9.5.2018, Cape Town, South Africa.
- Hujanen, Jaana, Lehtisaari Katja, Grönlund Mikko and Lindén Carl-Gustav (2018/forthcoming). Accepted presentation *News for local audiences: Gaps in the horizon?* European Communication Conference ECREA, Lugano, Switzerland 31.10–3.11.2018

Other presentations, lectures and courses:

International final seminar of the project *Business models of hyperlocal media*. Päivälehti museum Helsinki, 30.1.2018. Keynote speakers: Mary Walter-Brown, News Revenue Hub (USA) and Senior Lecturer David Baines, University of Newcastle (UK).

Jaana Hujanen and Mikko Grönlund (2018). Presentation *Hyperlocal media in Finland*, The final seminar of the project, Päivälehti museum Helsinki, 30.1.2018.

Carl-Gustav Lindén (2018). Chair for a panel discussion, the final seminar of the project, Päivälehti museum Helsinki, 30.1.2018.

Katja Lehtisaari (2018). Participant in a panel discussion. The final seminar of the project, Päivälehti museum Helsinki, 30.1.2018.

Press Conference of the project and its main results, Päivälehti museum Helsinki, 30.1.2018.

Round table discussions with industrial partners, 12.1.2017 and 5.4.2017, SSKH.

Media publicity (selected)

Västra Nyland, Thomas Sundström 3.12.2017. "Egetligen ingen överraskning". Interview with Jaana Hujanen. <https://www.vastranyland.fi/artikel/egentligen-ingen-overraskning/>

Yle Nyheter Västnyland, Petra Thilman 19.10.2017. "Forskare: Lokaljournalistiken har en framtid - men journalister producerar inte allt. Jaana Hujanen in interview. <https://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2017/10/19/forskare-lokaljournalistiken-har-en-framtid-men-journalister-producerar-inte-allt>.

Viisykkönen Paavo Rantalainen 5.4.2017. "Viisykkönen.fi mukana uuden median tutkimushankeessa - Helsingin Sanomien säätiö rahoittaa." Jaana Hujanen and Katja Lehtisaari in interview. www.viisykkonen.fi/uutiset/viisykkonenfi-mukana-uuden-median-tutkimushankeessa-%E2%80%93-helsingin-sanomien-s%C3%A4ti%C3%A4n-rahoittaa.

Suomen Lehdistö, Riikka Virranta 14.3.2018. "Aukkojen paikkaajat." Results of the project reported, researchers being interviewed.

Nopola News. "Nopola News Suomen Lehdistössä" 18.4.2018. Kyyjärven mediamyllärit, Aaro Toppinen. http://www.nopolanews.fi/artikkelit/2018/04/tekniikka_ja_talous/5597/nopola_news_suomen_lehdistossa. The story refers to the research project and the publication in Suomen Lehdistö.

Yle Nyheter (TV-nytt, Radio Vega and Radio Östnyland) 30.1.2018. Interview with Carl-Gustav Lindén about hyperlocal media in Swedish speaking Finland.