

# Community Workshops as a tool for collective learning

[https://video.laurea.fi/media/Voimaprofi+-+Community+Workshops/0\\_5zfcoort](https://video.laurea.fi/media/Voimaprofi+-+Community+Workshops/0_5zfcoort)

9.2.2024

Virpi Lund & Soile Juujärvi



# The method of Community Workshops

- Innovative method of co-creation and change
- Five workshops and real-life experiments within five months
- Boosts genuine development process in organisations
- Connects actors across different sectors and levels to collaborate and combine their resources
- Deepens the understanding of the problem area
- Produces effective and durable socially sustainable solutions
- Supports participants' learning and the development of their agency
- Collective learning process is led by researchers

- The method of Community Workshops is based on cultural-historical activity theory and the method of Change Laboratory
- The method of Change Laboratory is used to solve wicked problems of society such as poverty, climate change, and pandemics



- The method of Community workshops is used to promote the social, economic and political inclusion of vulnerable people



These challenges connect multiple actors and stakeholders across local and national levels <-> fourth generation of activity theory  
The actors need to be connected to enact their activities

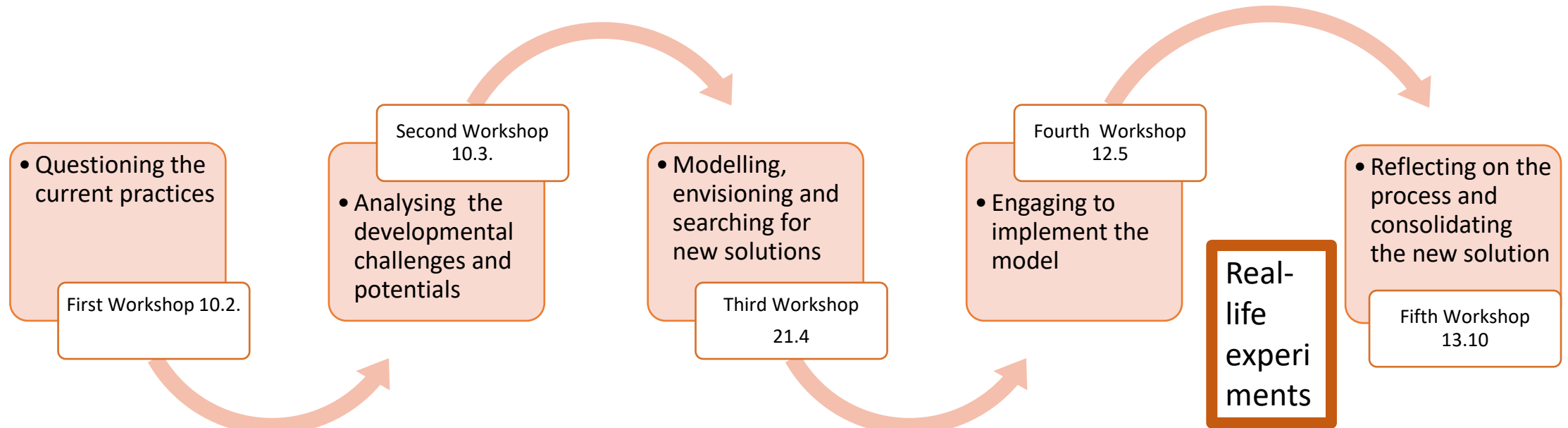
# Digital exclusion

- Public services are increasingly provided online
  - should provide easy access to citizens according to needs
- The digital divide emerges at three levels
  - 1) Access to Internet connection and smart devices
  - 2) Skills in using smart devices, Internet, and software
  - 3) Personal benefits from the use of Internet access and skills
- Vulnerable people fall behind others at each level

# Context of the common problem (shortage of digital support)

- Finland is one of the most advanced countries in digitalising public services
- Public services should be provided mainly online
- All people are not able to use them due to lack of smart devices and skills
- Public services have a task to provide support in the use of their digital services
- Other organisations also provide support on voluntary basis
  - NGOs, adult education centres, and banks
- Definition: Digital support = helping people use electronic devices and services independently and safely and strengthen their digital skills
  - can be hands-on assistance in the use of smart phone or online health care services or helping the installation of apps

# The process of Community Workshops 2022



->to develop multisite digital support for vulnerable people in the City of Espoo

- Five workshops (3 hours) with an experimenting session between 4th and 5th session
- Participants from national, urban, non-governmental and grassroots levels
- Working in 3-4 groups of 5-6 persons
- 41 participants, 17-21 in each workshop
- Open: more people can join in all the time
- Researchers: Giving instructions, supporting the groups, asking questions, summarising, repeating, collecting data



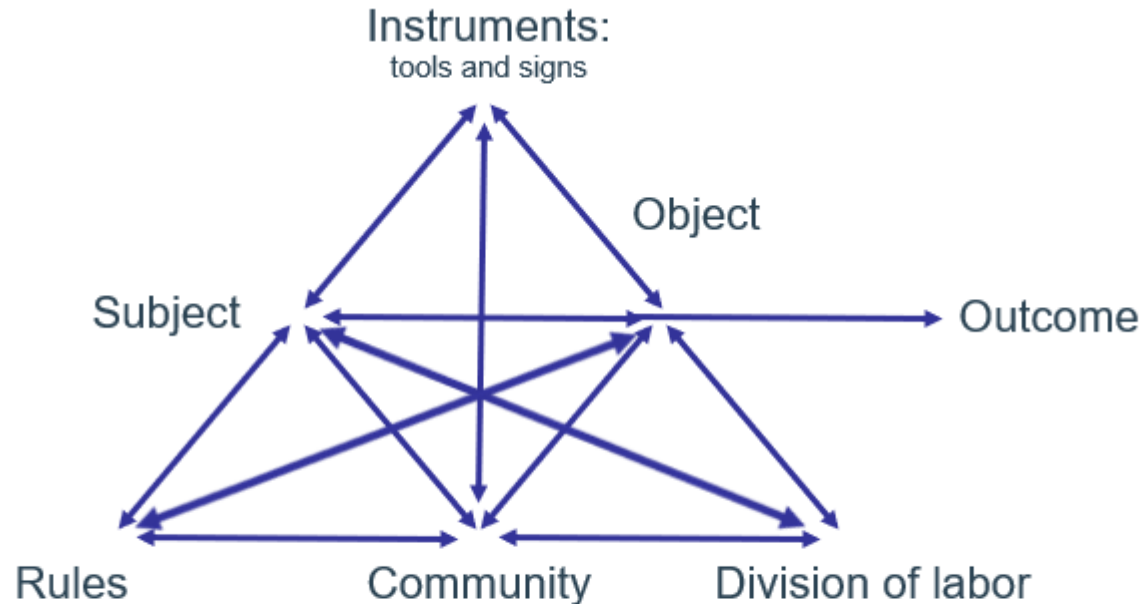
- Participants were actors who were interested in the development of digital support for people in vulnerable position
- Food-aid organisations, immigrant organisations, parishes, adult education center, library, social and health care services (municipality), the Social Insurance Institution (KELA), Digital and Population data Services agency (DVV), bank, peer supporters, IT-workers, staff from digital support projects, experts-by-experience, politicians, clients



**Learning at Community Workshops  
happens through resolving contradictions**

# The model of the activity system

- Helps to understand the activity and analyse its inner contradictions, the dynamics of relations and historical change

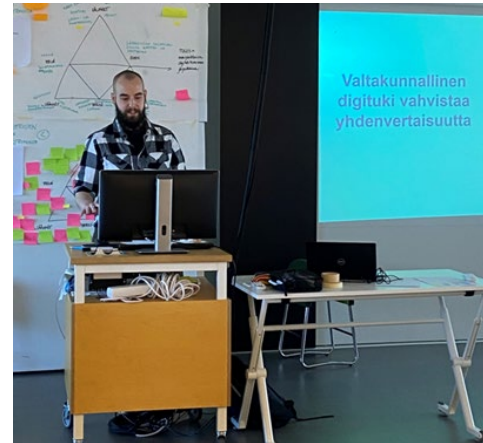
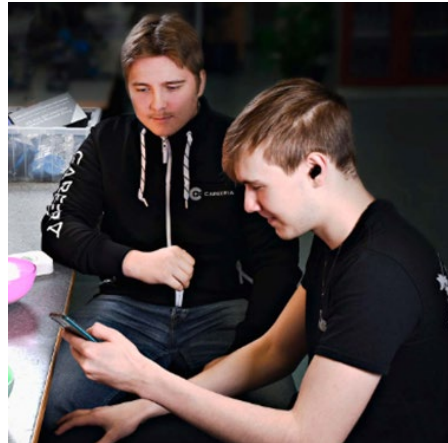


Source: Engeström, Y. (1987). Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research. Helsinki: Orienta-Konsultit.  
(available online at: <http://lchc.ucsd.edu/MCA/Paper/Engestrom/expanding/toc.htm>)

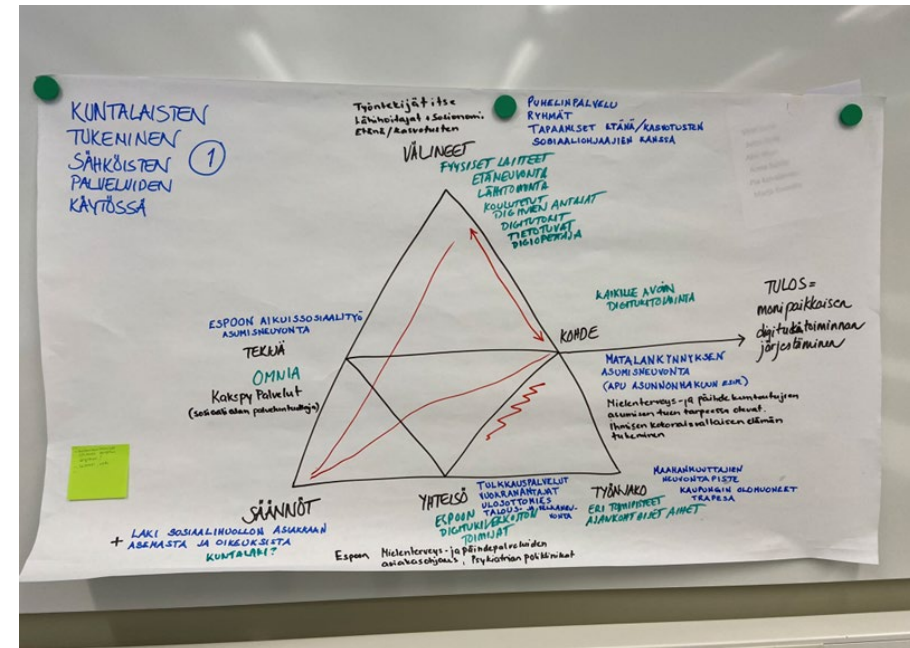
- Learning is understood as participation in a change that is manifested in social interaction with others
- Learning refers to the elaborating contradictions that arise from the tensions and movement in the above-mentioned elements in an activity system with the help of expansive learning actions
- Contradictions refer to disturbances between different goals, relations, and interests in an activity system
- Contradictions take different forms in discussions between people from many levels
- To solve social, economic and political inclusion of vulnerable people we need:
  - Movement of expansive learning cycles intersecting with one another in heterogenous coalition of activities
  - Learning is horizontal and vertical interplay between multiple coalescing cycles of expansive learning
  - Agency is transformative agency with double stimulation (TADS) (Sannino 2020)

**The process of double stimulation  
activates learning and transformation**

- 1. The mirror data are presented to participants by the researcher
  - Refers to concrete data describing the challenging situation in some ways
  - Illustrates the hidden details of the contradictions
  - Evokes criticism of the current situation and practice
  - Prompts the participants to build a shared first stimulus



- 2. The mirror data stimulate contradictions and expansive learning actions to emerge
  - Acts as the first stimulus that draws the participants' attention to issues requiring development
  - Motivates to resolve the problem
  - Indicates the tensions in an activity and makes participants collaborate as a collective




- The second stimulus means that the participants come up with a solution to a difficult situation together with the help of tools, for example a piece of information, speech, graph, map etc. and build a new practice to replace the old one
- Tools mediate activity between the subject and the object and transform the object and activity
- In the Community Workshops the second stimulus was the model of the activity system and its elements, which was given to the participants as an instrument for analysing the contradictions

# Strengths and challenges in the activity of digital support

## Tools:


- digital devices
- guidelines
- digital skills
- strong identification



Digital transactions require a Prepaid access and money or going to the service desk.

## Subject:

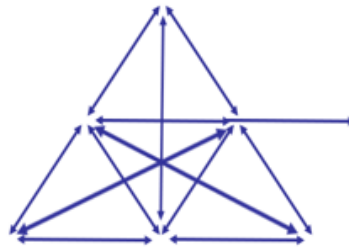
- users of essential basic services, who do not have digital skills, digital devices, money, language, reading or writing skills



A volunteer digital supporter sees customer's confidential personal and banking information.

## Rules:


- ethical guidelines for digital support
- laws: Local Government Act, Digital Services Act, Professional Laws
- information security
- customer fees
- instructions on how to apply for benefits
- funding of digital support



## Object:

- fluent and accessible use of electric services
- increasing digital inclusion

**Outcome:** Multisite digital support



The customer travels in many places, receiving or not receiving digital support.

## Community:

- close people and social networks
- service desks
- low threshold places
- volunteers, digital buddies
- authorities
- service providers
- sales staff of the devices
- libraries and adult education centers
- food-aid organizations
- parishes

## Division of labor:

- roles of the digital supporters
- the division of responsibilities between public services and the third sector
- digital support of the bank
- the same digital support is done at several points
- directing and continuing guidance to digital support

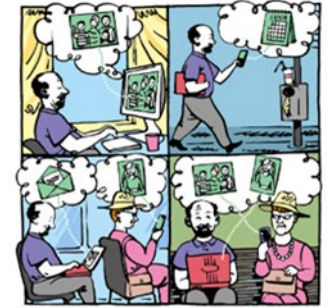


## Real life experiments leading to consolidation:

- A common digital language for everyone - comics to help digital support

<https://kokemustiedonkeskus.fi/videokirjasto/kuvat-ja-logot/>

- The visual symbol for digital support



Pilvipalvelu

— Lataa

- Statement on the Government proposal related to the reform of the Income Act:  
DIGITAL DEVICES AND TELECOMMUNICATION CONNECTIONS MUST BE TAKEN  
INTO THE ACCOUNT IN OTHER BASIC EXPENDITURE

# References

- Engeström, Y. 2007. Putting activity theory to work: The Change Laboratory as an application of double stimulation. In H. Daniels, M. Cole, & J.V. Wertsch (Eds.), *The Cambridge company to Vygotsky* (pp.363–382). Cambridge University Press.
- Lund, V., & Juujärvi, S. 2023. Monipaikkaisen digituen ristiriidat ja ekspansiivinen oppiminen yhteisöpajoissa. *Kasvatus*, 54(3), 221–236.
- Sannino, A. 2015. The principle of double stimulation: A path to volitional action. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 6, 1–15.
- Sannino, A. 2020. Enacting the utopia of eradicating homelessness: toward a new generation of activity-theoretical studies of learning. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 42(2), 163–179.
- Virkkunen, J. & Newnham, D. 2013. *The Change Laboratory*. Sense Publishers.

[https://video.laurea.fi/media/Voimaprofi+-+Community+Workshops/0\\_5zfcoorl](https://video.laurea.fi/media/Voimaprofi+-+Community+Workshops/0_5zfcoorl)

