

DESIGN FOR GOVERNMENT
AALTO UNIVERSITY | SCHOOL OF ART & DESIGN

PROJECT PIAZZA

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SUMMARY

Project Piazza was commissioned by the Prime Minister's Office to look into the problems and possibilities of creating a platform where civil servants can use to find relative information to enhance and improve government evidence based decision making. The project was part of the Design for Government course in Aalto University and was ran in collaboration with Demos Helsinki.

The aim of Project Piazza is to do research and come up with a solution to enhance evidence based policy making. This report breaks down the 14 week-long project into three main sections: research and fieldwork, key findings and proposal.

The research and fieldwork focused on finding the problems, opportunities and gatekeepers of change in the landscape of government evidence based decision making. Our group conducted interviews and workshops and was able to map out stakeholders and different processes that deemed important to understand. By better understanding the landscape of the problem, the team began to identify problem areas, opportunity areas and changemakers.

Our research led us to a few key findings. Firstly, there are huge differences between the decision making process and research process. Evidence based policy making is about making connections between the two processes. Civil servants who make decisions and write policies are the gatekeepers who have position between research evidence and policy making. Both processes run on different time scales, with research process being much slower than the policy making process. Differences in motives, incentives and use of language make collaboration between the two processes difficult.

Secondly, information is scattered. Although information is available, the scatteredness of information makes it hard to access. Even in the government, ministries and research institutes have their own channels of storing and distributing information, resembling silos. Many civil servants

have desires for a centralized channel for finding information that would make their job of applying evidence to decision making easier.

Thirdly, there is room for improvement in the horizontal communication within the government ministries and research institutes. Each institution does their own research and have their own access to experts and information. Knowledge of good research and information exist within the government, but are not shared.

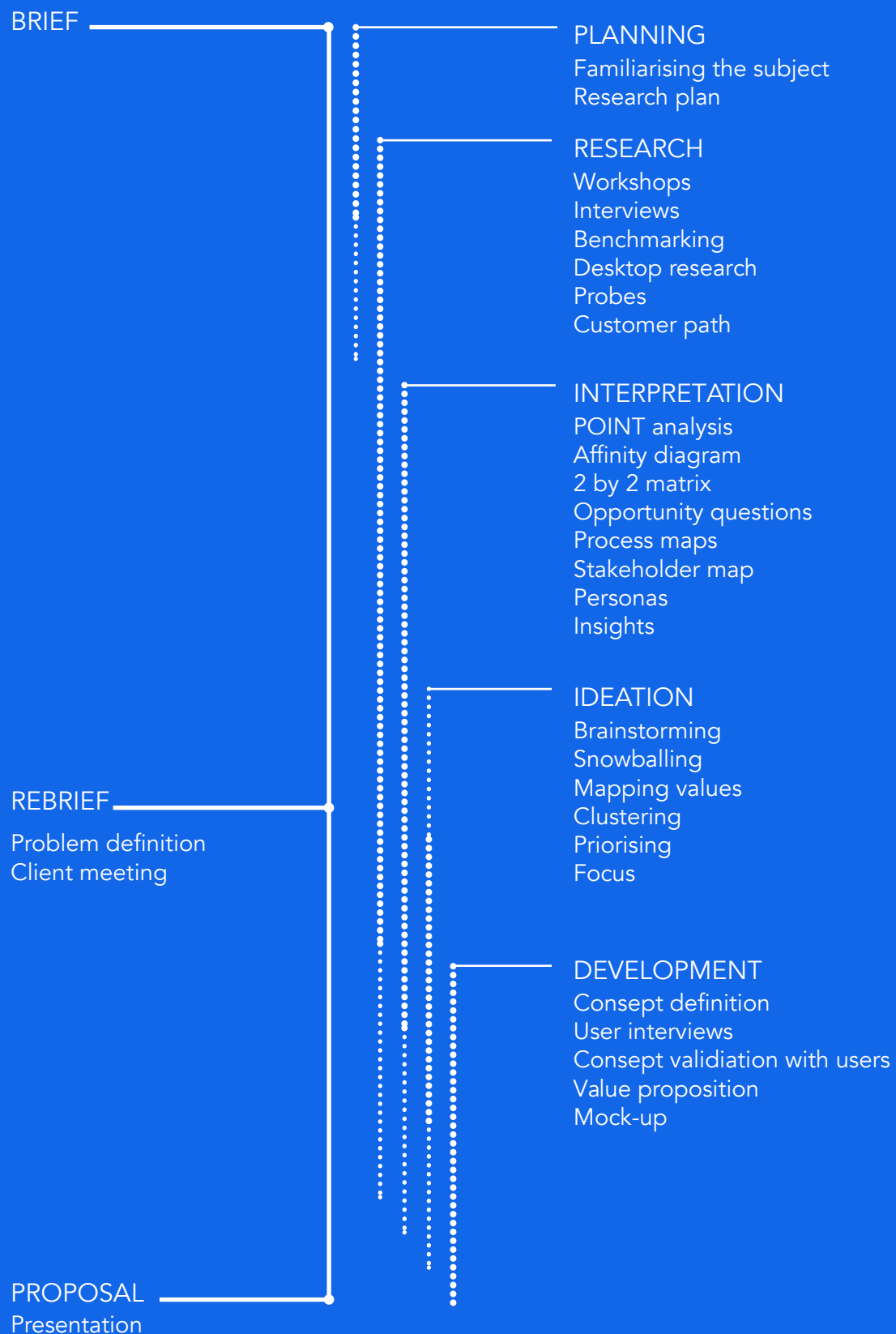
Lastly, decision making and policy writing civil servants need access to the right information at the right time. There are currently limited tools available that can help them sort out information so that they can find what they need when they need it.

Our team proposed a concept that addresses the problems and opportunities from the key findings. The proposed concept is called Sammio, an online platform where users can have access to all research information produced by the government and government research institutes. Sammio aims to help users make connections to information they are looking for by presenting the results in a visual format. Sammio benefits civil servants by giving them access to the right information at the right time. Moreover, Sammio aims to help the general public gain a better overview of the government strategies, opening possibilities for a more participatory approach to government evidence based decision making.

The roadmap of Sammio will be split into three phases to be spread over a maximum of a three year period. From phase 1 of building the platform, phase 2 beta testing, and finally, phase 3 product launch.



1. PROJECT TIME LINE



2. INTRODUCTION

You are about to read the final report of group Piazza One from the course Design for Government 2015. The course was organised for the second time by Aalto University of Arts and Science. Project Piazza, the project our group was working on was assigned by the Prime Minister's office.

The initial brief of Prime Minister's Office stated the need of Finnish government for a tool to give access to RDI (research, development and innovation) projects, results, expertise and overviews for both the producers: researchers and project leaders, think tanks and the audience: policy makers, funding organizations, journalists, politicians and public.

Prime Minister's Office's goal was to get a proposal for a functional, straightforward and transparent tool and a strategic pathway to concrete, feasible proposals for the next stages for development and communication.

RE-BRIEFING

During our design research process we found a lot of challenges and also possibilities. Some themes were repeating like the lack of time to read lengthy research results, the amount of scattered informations and time consuming searching and the lack of horizontal information flows and collaboration. We found out that for those who have time and who are familiar with reading academic papers it wasn't difficult to find research results. Bigger challenge was the people who don't have that expertise nor time but who still are in need of reliable knowledge to base their decisions on. Their need was to have the information in more readable form. Luckily there are already many people working for that in ministries and in research institutes.

Based on our findings we decided to concentrate on the challenge of the scattered information and re-framed our goal to enhance the utilization of in-house expertise and to benefit from all the publicly funded information that is yet scattered but already available in ministries and governmental research institutes.

3. RESEARCH AND FIELDWORK

During 14 weeks, researchers, civil servants, policy makers and experts from think tanks, different companies and city council took part in Piazza project. There were over 30 active participants and some of them we met and contacted several times.

We used various methods to collect and organise the data related to our task. We interviewed stakeholders, organised workshops and tested our ideas with potential users. We read through numerous reports and articles and benchmarked projects and websites in search of the optimal solution. Through our research we worked on understanding what could be the most efficient ways to improve knowledge based decision making in Finland.

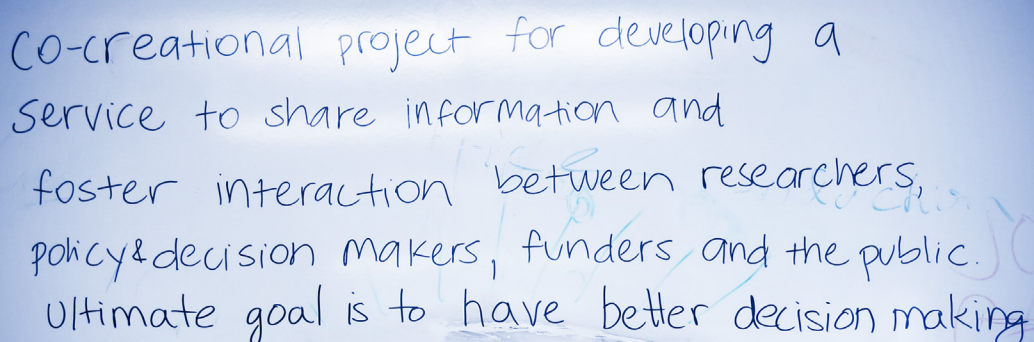
METHODS

Design workshops are co design sessions in which stakeholders related to a project are invited to participate. Typical goal of a design workshop is to generate ideas and understanding regarding the subject. Designers usually facilitate the workshop and document the results and observations which are then finally analyzed to find a right focus.

We held altogether three workshops with 14 stakeholders and potential users. During the first workshop for stakeholders we used ATLAS tool as the main method to help to outline the goals and expectations and to map the stakeholders,

challenges and opportunities of the project. ATLAS is a board game where participants collaboratively create a project plan for a service co-development project. During the game the players draw hexagonal tiles from stacks, place them on the table and collaboratively answer questions presented on the tiles. The workshop helped us to learn more about the problem and the brief itself, the stakeholders and their hopes and wishes and underlying needs.

The goal of the Piazza project was defined with the workshop participants as follows:



Co-creational project for developing a service to share information and foster interaction between researchers, policy&decision makers, funders and the public. Ultimate goal is to have better decision making



Concept validation workshop at Valtimo

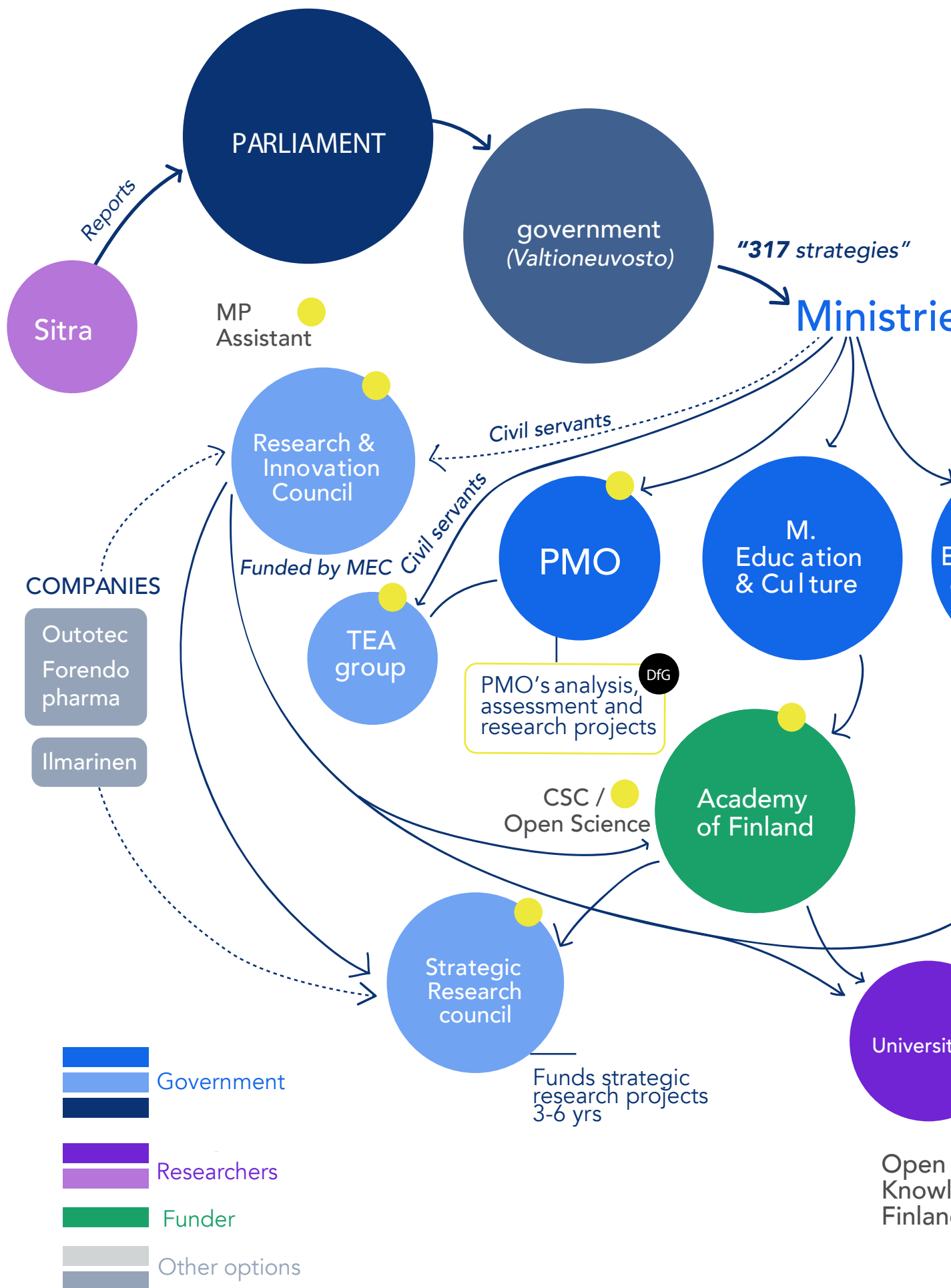
The aim of the second workshop was to understand in detail the needs and practises of the primary users and to test and further develop the opportunity areas. A secondary aim was to get different stakeholders around one table and give them an opportunity to share and discuss their working realities, challenges, dreams and common ground.

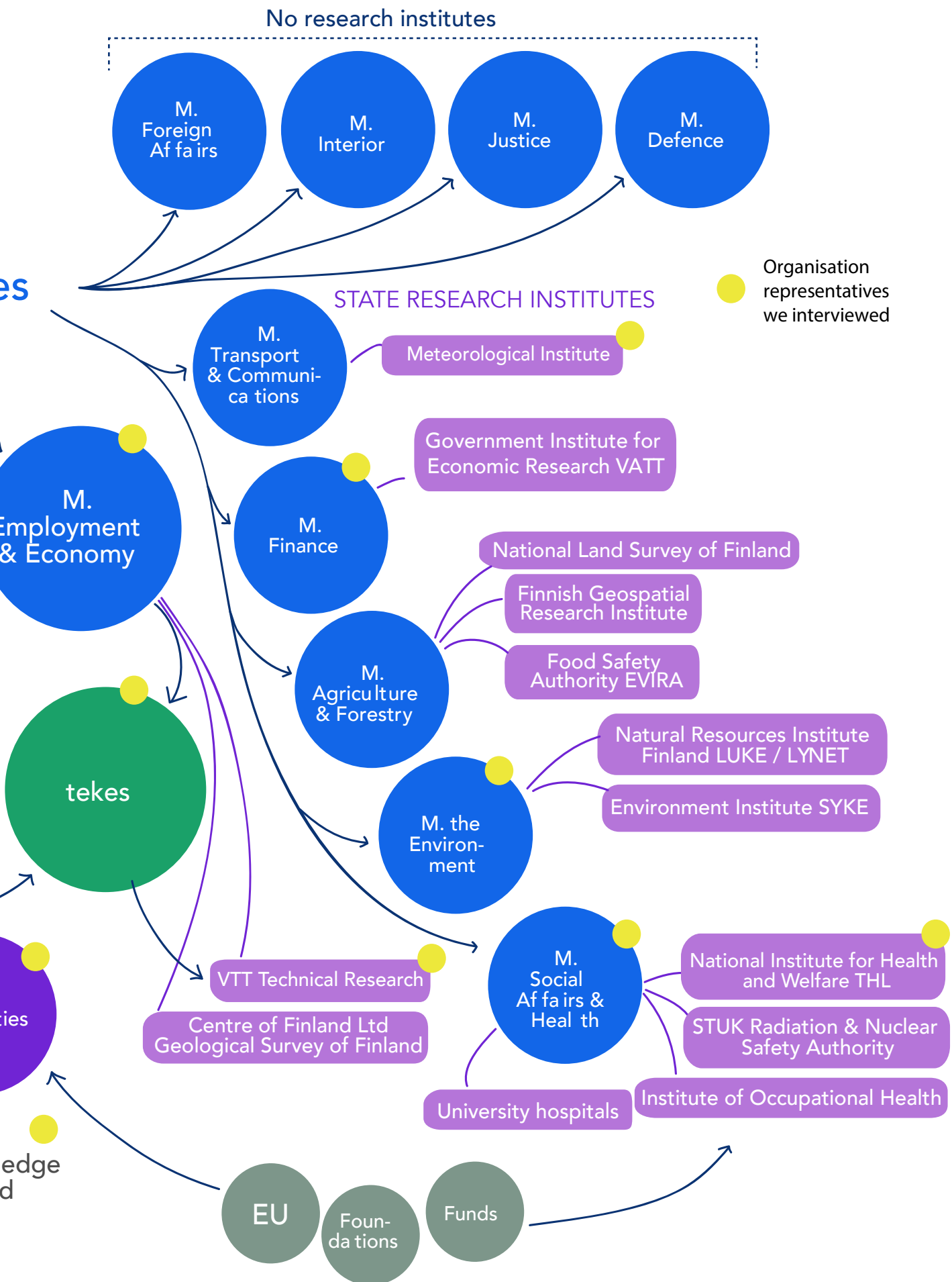
The last workshop which we called “The concept validation workshop” was more of a breakfast than a workshop. The idea was to create a relaxed environment to have both a conversations and get feedback on our concept but also test more informal way for sharing information, getting connected and learning from others.

Using **design probes** is a technique to get first hand information from the users about everyday life situations to help better understand their needs. Design probes usually include small tasks of writing or documenting for the receiver. Before the second workshop, we sent design probes to the invited participants asking them to fill in an information searching and usage diary of 1-3 of their working days and to take pictures of their working spaces. The aim was to gain knowledge of the daily practices of information usage and communication.

To understand the system and relations of the stakeholders we did 25 **stakeholder and user interviews** during the process. We did the interviews mostly face to face and in pairs with one interviewer from each Piazza team to ensure that both teams would get first-hand insights from the interviewees. In the beginning some key questions were agreed and then before each interview the set of questions were chosen and new ones added according to the role and expertise of the interviewee. The questions naturally evolved with our understanding of the issue. It was quite easy to get in touch with people and most of them answered our emails. Members of parliament were very difficult to get in touch with and we didn't succeed in reaching any of them.

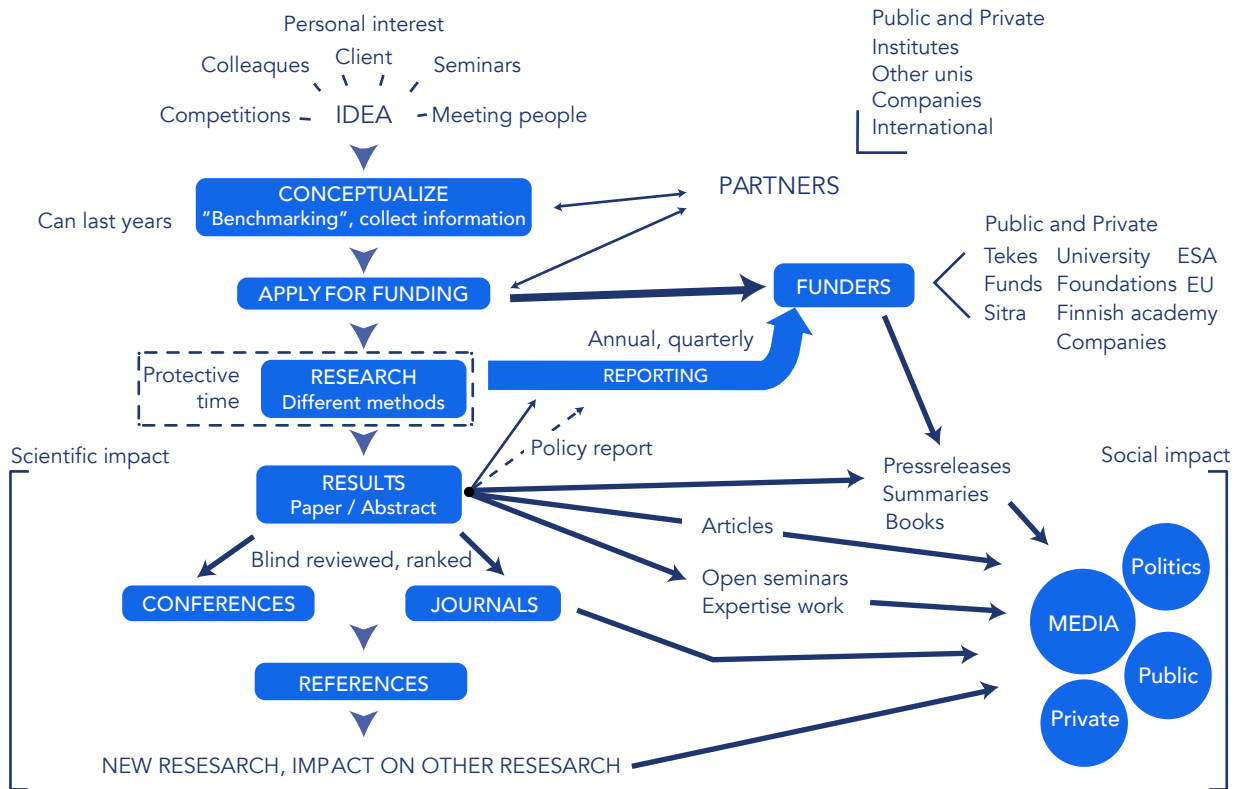
Based on the information from the interviews and desktop research we created a **stakeholder map** to understand the bigger picture and relevant stakeholders and their relations. (See the map on next page) In this map is also marked the organisations of the interviewees.



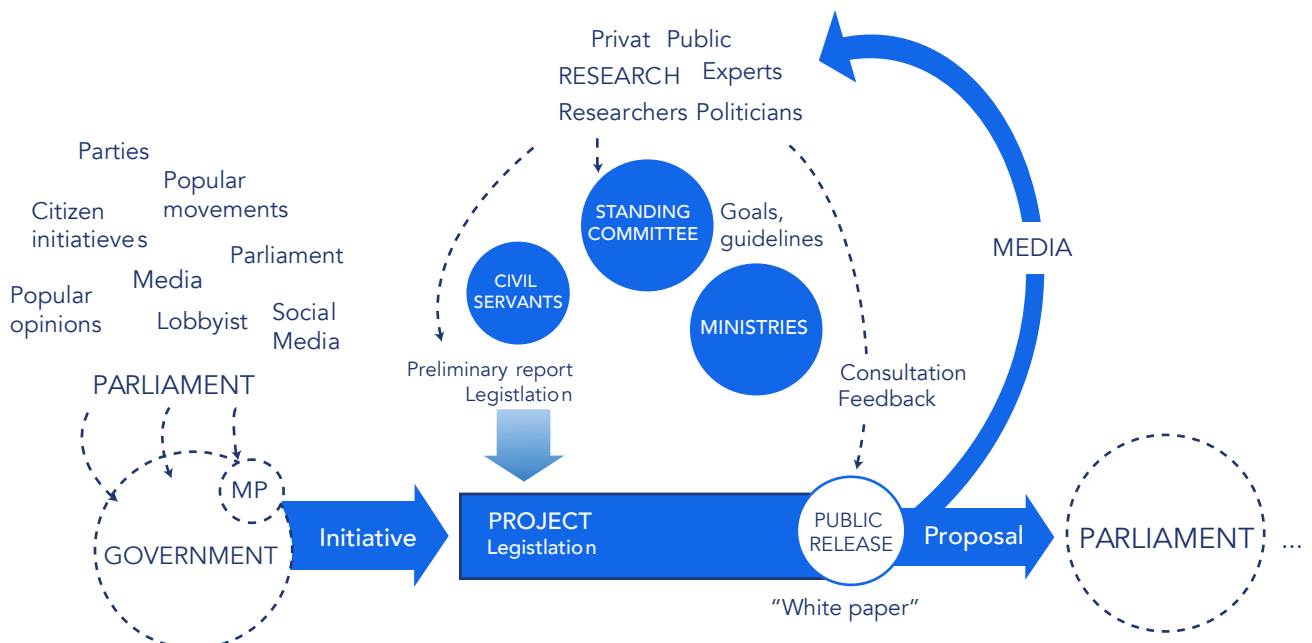


Process maps were created when getting familiar with the different practises of research and legislation processes. Process maps were useful in understanding what are the goals and motivations and where are the connection points of those two very different processes.

RESEARCH PROCESS (DRAFT)



LEGISLATION PROCESS (DRAFT)





Data analysis process and collection of insights.

During the phase of interpretation and comprehending we used clustering methods and made affinity diagrams. **Affinity diagram** is a tool used to organise ideas and data into groups based on natural relationships. In affinity diagram method every idea is written down.

It was important that every team member's insights were collected and organised.

These pictures illustrate the situation after collecting the insights and the process of clustering them.



Super team collaboration, making sense of the data.

4. KEY FINDINGS

According to our research and data analysis we organized the findings in five main categories. We used these categories to define the focus of our concept and the main challenges we had to tackle. The classification of information includes opportunity areas for the conceptual design, the current situation and obstacles to overcome. When defining the scope of the service we understood the questions we needed to respond with our concept.

RESEARCH AND DECISION MAKING PROCESS

When examining research and evidence-based policy we found out that there is no clear connection between them. Firstly decision making is not always a process based on evidence or facts, it is often influenced by personal or political values [1]. This conclusion was reinforced by the participants of our second workshop. One stated on policy making "...there has been no methodological discussion. In democracy you make decisions on values, not just on research knowledge, is an inherent part of our democratic system. There are exceptions, for example in the field of health." Furthermore, currently it is difficult to trace the information used for making policy. There is no tool for it.

Secondly the researchers and decision makers are two instances that function very differently. Research is slow, long term process and policy making is a short term and fast decision making process. There is little time to read academic papers and analyse the influence of research findings into policy. One reason for this is the fact that hard science does not necessarily respond to societal phenomena and questions policy makers are searching the answers for. This is resulting in two different ways of working, using of language and interpreting the information.

"...they (researchers and policy makers) should understand each other's working process for better collaboration."

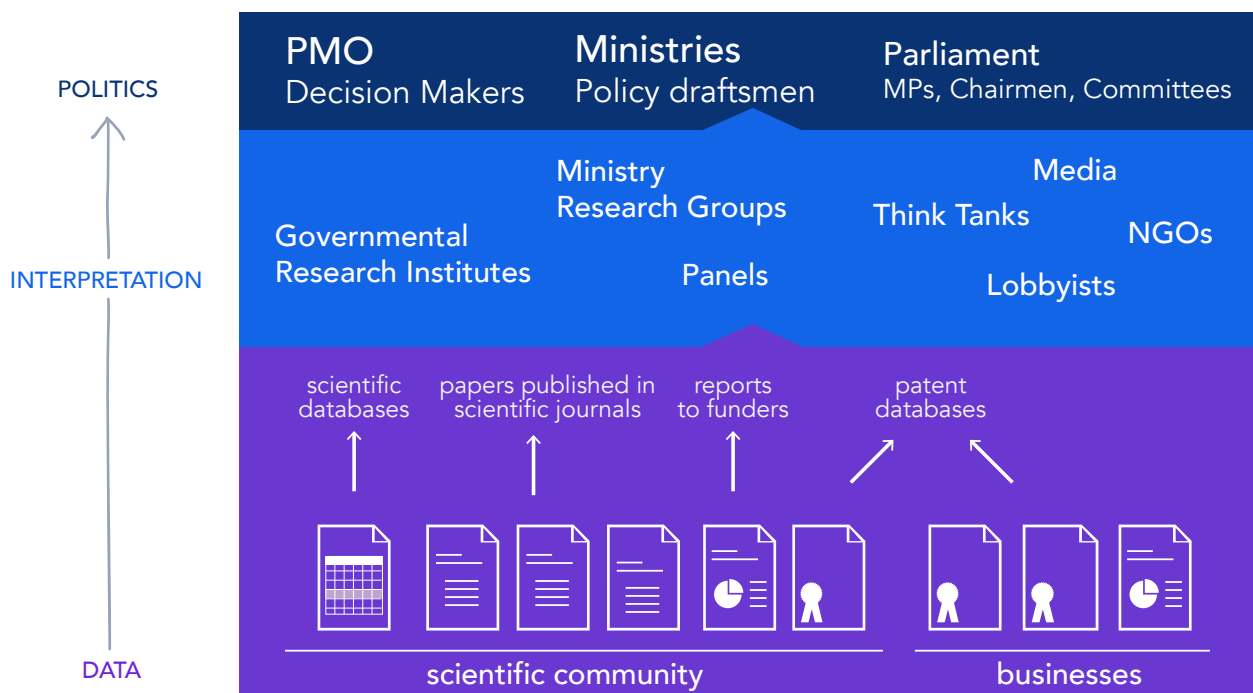
(Journalist working with research communication)

Thirdly, we found the actors creating the bridge between research and policy making. This middle layer consists of governmental research institutes, ministerial research groups, think tanks, lobbyists, media, NGOs and others. They are the ones translating research into more readable form for policy making. Academic and scientific papers do not present the contextual perspective, long term implications and analysis needed for policy making. We recognized the need in decision making for applied research related to political and societal phenomena.

"Research institutes have direct impact on legislation and a collective answer from institutes is more influential than a single research project."
(Head Researcher at the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare.)

Based on these insights we contemplated if collecting scientific research for better policy was actually the most essential need or could there be more use for the applied in-house research commissioned by or closely related to the government.

"Connect research topics with what is happening in the news, politics, policies, there is a missing link when politicians need the researchers knowledge and input." *(Journalist working with research communication)*



Use of research and the middle layer diagram.

SCATTERED INFORMATION

We counted over thirty websites for searching information, people and projects related to the government. Each ministry and research institute has their own, distinct site in addition to the different databases for public information. The lack of one single portal for sharing and communicating governmental research, reports and projects is resulting in inefficient distribution and access of information. Civil servants are gatekeepers of information, but they do not have a platform where they can see and overview the governmental information and projects.

We used a lot of time visiting different websites to collect information relevant from the government during our research process and learned from own experience that here is no one access point to reports, strategies, announcements and policies. A consequence of the scatteredness is the silos of information in governmental institutions that leave also civil servants to rely on their personal networks when searching for information. Databases store the reports but they do not connect them to the people.

*"Each research facility has communication services, but the challenge is how to create the "twitter of research" that is top of mind like wikipedia when civil servants are searching for information."
(Graphic designer working with research communication)*

A matter that we encountered frequently was that the interviewees wished for a more centralized channel for finding information. They didn't ask for a new website parallel to the many existing ones, but one to connect them. At the same time we heard repeatedly that people didn't have time to read research results or if they did, they already had their ways to find the information. Our conclusion was that there was a significant need to redesign the basic information flow within the government and its institutes to better utilize the existing information.

"It would be very helpful if all the reports in every ministry could be found in one single place. Even after 10 years of working there, sometimes information that would be helpful just slips.." (Civil Servant in the Ministry of Education and Culture)

HORIZONTAL COMMUNICATION

It is evident that information scatterness is related to an unarticulated communication within ministries and institutions. Each ministry orders their own research, there doesn't seem to be coordination or standardized system for sharing information. Even though a governmental intranet exists, our interviewees claimed that it doesn't promote collaboration within ministries nor an overview on ongoing or finished projects. This situation can lead to overlapping in projects instead of co-operation.

*"Syke (Finnish Environment Institute) has 2000 projects and I don't know what those projects are about, even less about other places."
(Researcher and former Civil Servant)*

We discovered current efforts to steer strategies and better collaboration within the government, such as the TEA Group (Analysis, Assessment and Research group), The Ohra project, Change Makers movement and personal will from our interviewees. We found the need for a tool for promoting and communicating governmental strategies and to link information between them. Connecting research to strategies could improve backtracking the evidence used to make the policies. The stakeholders also asked for interaction channels for civil servants and researchers to expand their existing networks and translate the knowledge to the new generations of civil servants.

The dependence of civil servants on their personal networks is a product of time constraints and poor accessibility to information and experts. Therefore the new service should make visible the links between people and information. This could help the users to be more time efficient, to optimize horizontal collaboration and to improve governmental communication. This insight was confirmed when two civil servants were discussing in our workshop about the platforms they use to search for projects and the other one had never heard about Research.fi and the other one was new to Hankehaavi.

The question is if the new service could improve the ways to communicate strategies, policies, reports and others. Could the new platform emphasize on better practices related to information by conveying and sharing it efficiently?

"It would be beneficial for other ministries not only to see the information, but to check which methods and processes were used to gather the information". (Civil Servant at the Ministry of Education and Culture)



Team members working on ideation process.

VALUABLE INFORMATION

Knowing that there are challenges using unprocessed scientific research as a direct source of information for governmental decision making, we needed to identify what other information was valuable for decision makers. When we asked the stakeholders they said that reports from applied research are important but that an easy access to experts, statistics, long term effects and policy briefs, international research and scientific diplomacy were needed as well as informal meetings and conversations. We found out that some funders such as Tekes are encouraging researchers to write policy briefs and that this initiative could be cultivated by providing a direct communication channel from researchers to policy makers.

So the valuable information for decision making in the government can be many things. The need depends on what kind of information one is searching and on the type of decisions are in the making. In a case of a strategic decisions the need is more for an overview or a glance of multiple projects than detailed information. For decision making the need can be for statistics, long term implications or reports or for detailed information around the topic. Some examples mentioned in the interviews that are often used are: Statistics Finland, The World Bank database, The British Council for their journalistic summaries of reports, Innokyla when related to health data and the Legislative Explorer website to follow the process of legislation in United States.

"People who are not academics, can also contribute a lot to the conversation" (Think Tank Head Researcher)

These kind of answers pushed us towards our decision to focus on enhancing the flow of the data and information related more closely to govern-

ment and not to all publicly funded academic and scientific research. The priority was to enhance the collecting of relevant data and improving the information flow for decision making in the public sector. Combining the governmental data could be the starting point and the service could utilize the existing databases. There is information that is already open and available and what is needed it to collect and organize the data and build the user interface with features supporting searching, organising and sharing information.

For the user the service would not only be providing a storage platform but an easy access to searchable and browsable information. The user could be able to choose the search filters and options and have the possibility to follow or create groups of interest. Research and projects could be related to people to make networks and connections visible. Visual overviews of information and projects from the government could create a possibility to see unexpected results when browsing for the information. We found out that companies such as Google and IBM are successfully using employee generated content on platforms to managing their internal communication. Finnish government has a civil servant intranet, but so it hasn't been very popular as we learned from the interviews.

We saw an opportunity in using already existing databases, channels as governmental intranet and ministerial internal platforms as a starting point for a new service. We decided to frame our scope to in-house knowledge and networking within the government.

"Focus on how to connect to the meta data bases, not the data itself and what services to integrate around them." (Representative of Open Science Finland Initiative)

5. PROPOSAL

With the help of the findings, we developed a concept that would address the problems in the key findings. The concept must be implementable, acceptable and answers to the design brief. With that in mind, we came up with our concept called Sammio.

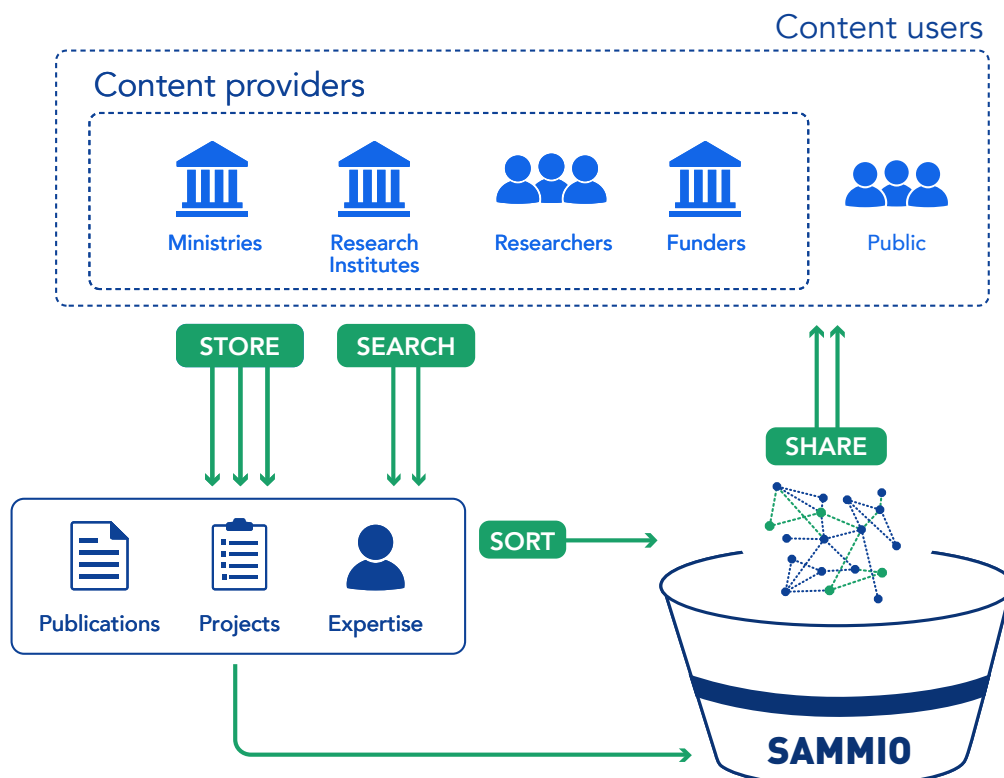
SAMMIO

Sammio is a platform where research information produced by the government can be found. Sammio provides many services that allows users to effectively and efficiently find useful information related to government research. The information includes published reports, project information and profile information of civil servants involved in the reports or projects. Through the platform, users can gain overview and about what the government is doing in sense of research and at the same time, have access to detailed information about research done by the government. Essentially, Sammio is the knowledge and expertises of the Finnish Government, all in one place. The aim

of Sammio is to allow civil servants to gain access to expertise and knowledge within the government so that evidence based policy making can be made easier and faster.

INFORMATION

Sammio is a platform where users can find three types of information from all Finnish Government ministries and government research institutes; they are publications, people and projects. The information is a compilation of already existing information (mostly publications) from the different websites and databases of the different government ministries and research institutes.



Information flow diagram (simplify).

SERVICES

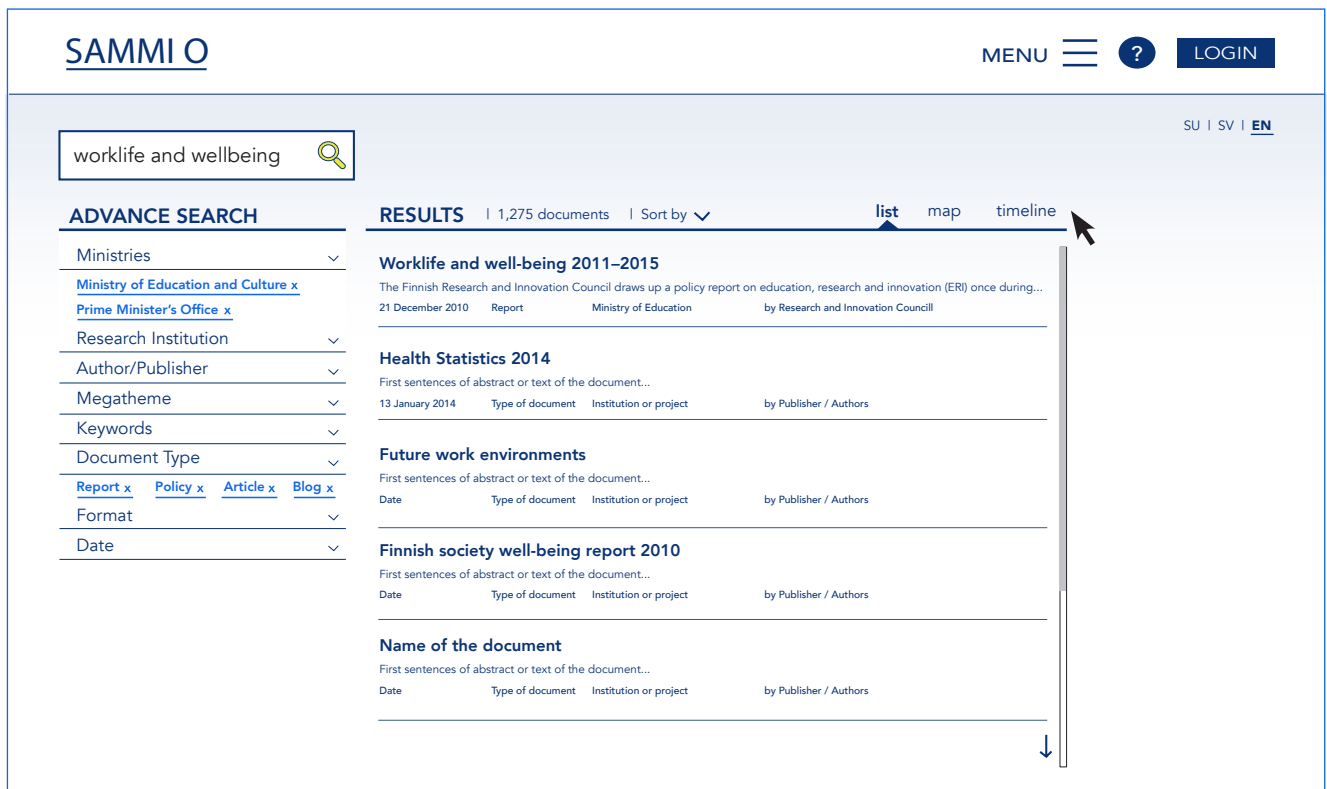
The aim of Sammio is not only to provide results but to help the users understand connections between the results. The basic service of search is supported by many smaller services of sorting and sharing that makes Sammio unique compared with other similar search engines. Since the accessibility of information was found to be a key issue for civil servants, Sammio's primary aim is to tackle the accessibility issue of information. To make information accessible, Sammio takes into account the ability of the users to understand and perceive information, providing the right choices for users so that they can have the best access to the information possible.

SEARCH

The search function is a core services of Sammio. It is the default service that is visible on the homescreen. The function of the search service is to allow users to find relevant information through keywords. Sammio searches the index database for any publications or projects that contains information that is relevant to the keywords.



Above is a concept of how the Sammio homepage could look like. Besides the regular search option, information can also be browse



Above is a concept of how Sammio list results page will look like. Notice that advance search options are available on the left that helps sort the information displayed. The options to display results in map or timeline options are seen on the top right corner of the results.

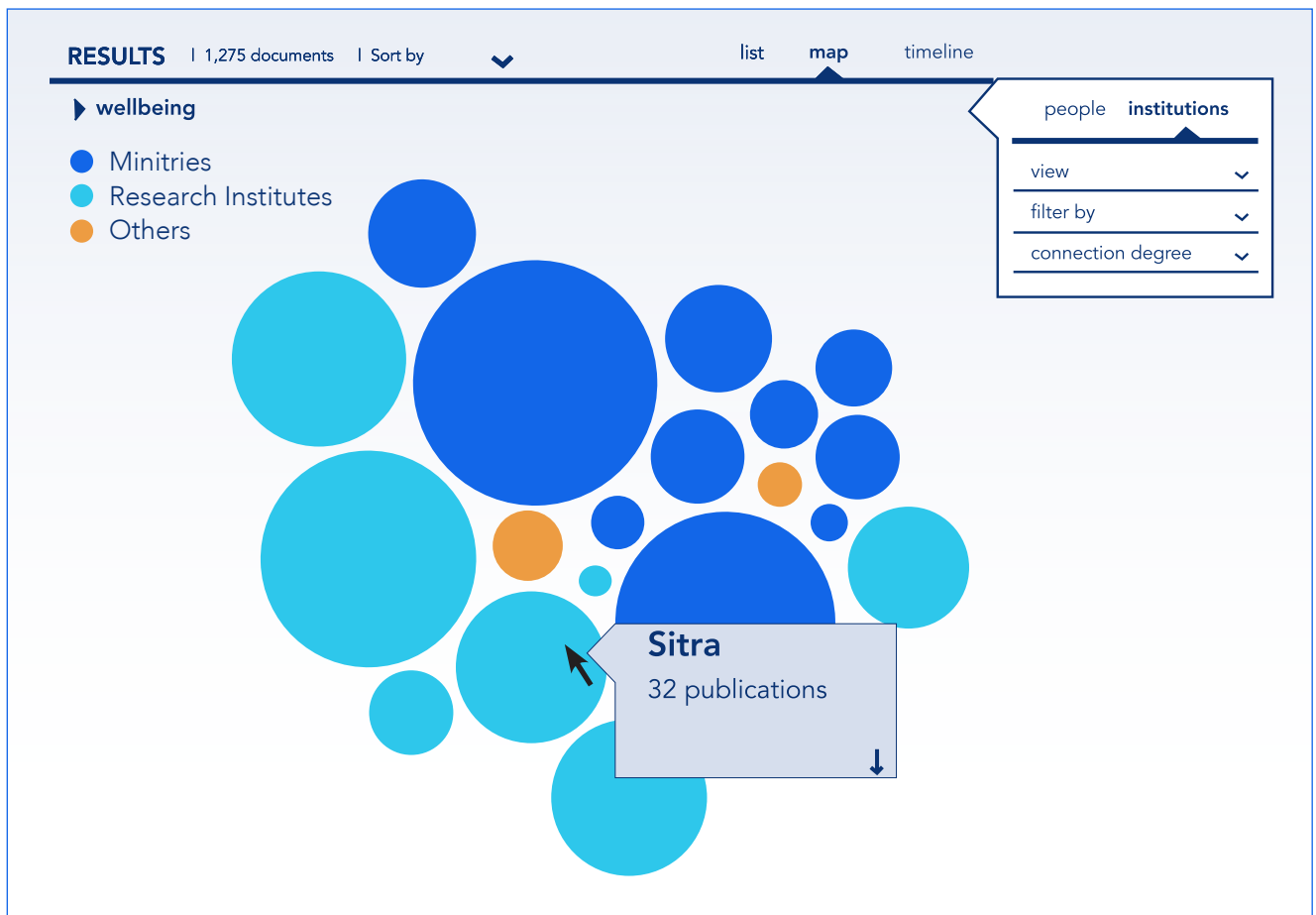
SORT

Like many search engines, Sammio have a sort service that allows users to narrow down the search scope. However, Sammio's sort service is designed specifically for sorting publications, people and projects from government ministries and research institutes. The sort categories include the typical ones such name, date published, last edited, last read etc. In addition to the typical sort categories, there are also more specific to Sammio's aim such as sort by ministry or institute, sort by relevance to government strategies, sort by relevance to mega-themes or trends etc. The specific sort categories are meant to help users find information that is deemed important in the government or in the public eye.

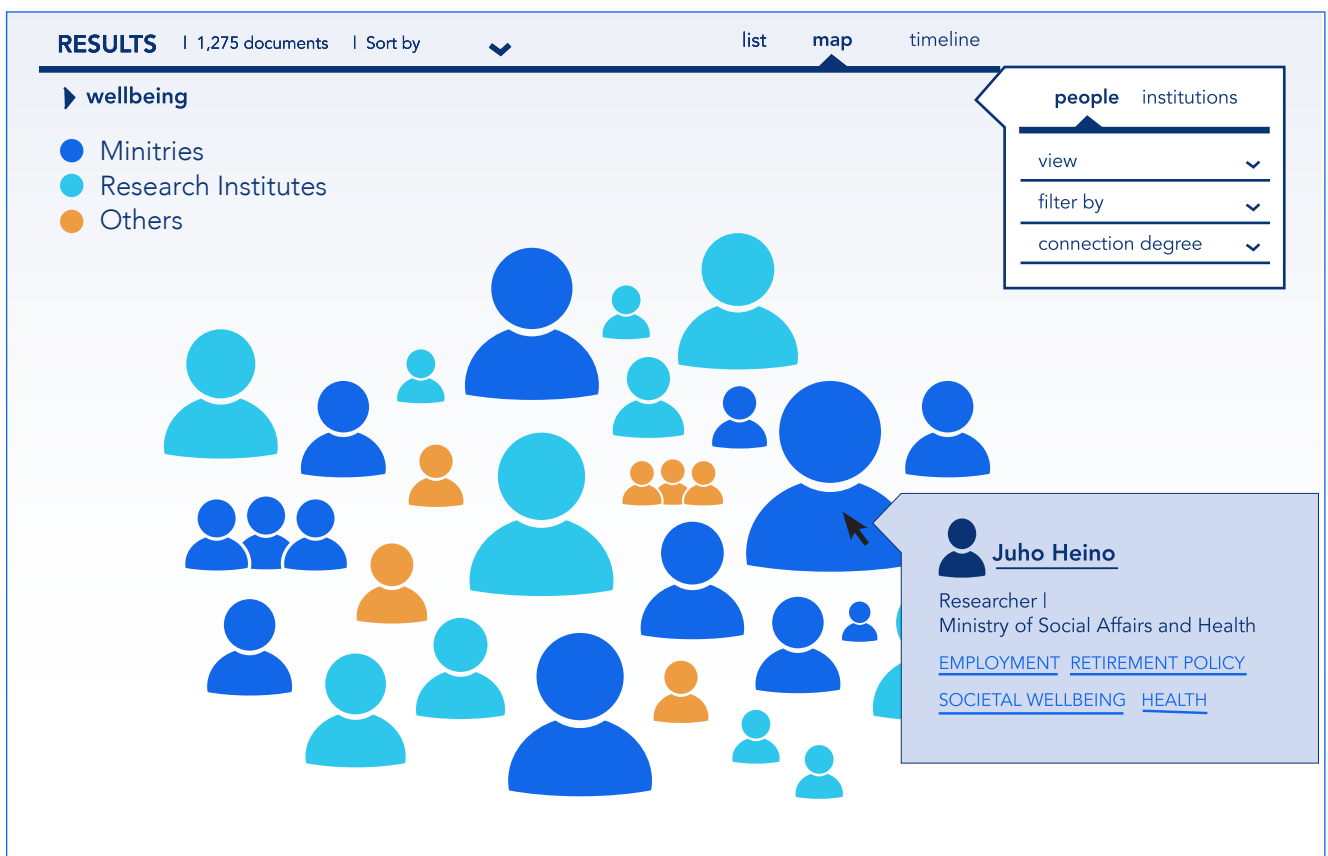
VISUALIZATION

Part of making information accessible is making it easily understandable and navigable. Each result page can be viewed in three formats; list, map or timeline.

The visualization of the results help users explore relevance in a way that is more interactive and commonsensical. Relevance can be presented in many ways. From size of each individual result that indicates the amount of relevant information, to the positioning of the results on a page that indicates the relevance of information to keywords, subjects or categories.



Images of the possible formats that Sammio results can be viewed maps. Above sorted by institutions, below as people.





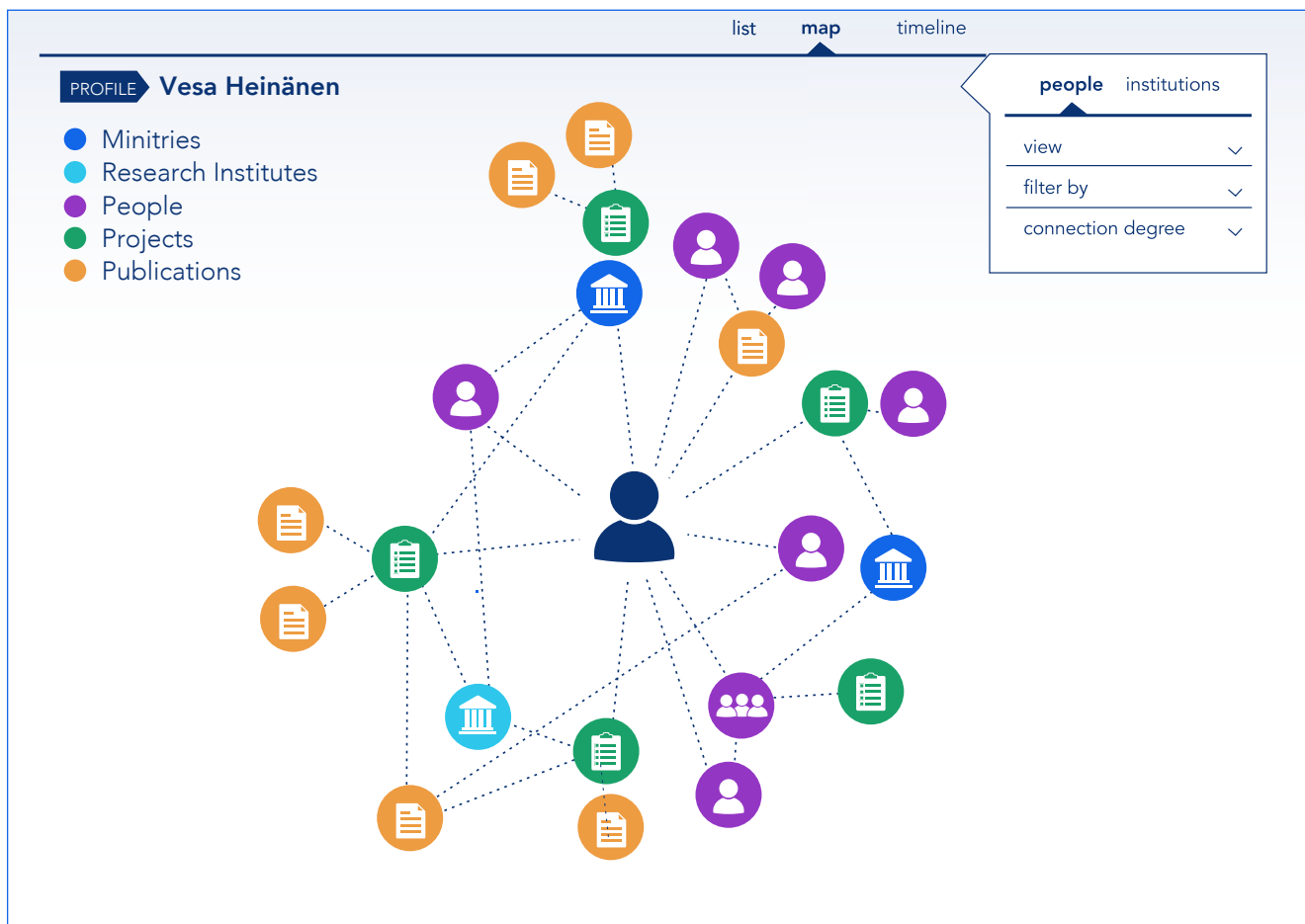
Above an example of how could the results be viewed as a time line format.

The timeline is a visual way of viewing when publications were published or when projects took place. This is a useful tool users who are in need of understanding the trends of government research.

RELATIONSHIP MAPS

The map format allows users to see results sorted by position to the center of page. The more center, the more relevant it is to the searched keyword or browsed topic. The results are connected to show the connections between them. Users can visually identify the connections between results, such as whether the same people were in the same project, or if a report is originated from interministerial collaboration.

Next image shows an example of map format results. The image shows a page where a search keyword led to a profile of a civil servant. The profile shows the connections of the civil servant to many things he/she is involved with. However, the search is about 'what is relevant to the searched keyword that this civil servant have connections to.



Profile of a civil servant and his connections to information.

PURPOSE

Sammio can be the first step towards a more evidence based decision making government. by combining the efforts, knowledge and expertises of the civil servants, the Finnish government will be in a stronger position to make better evidence based decisions in every aspect of governance.

Sammio not only provides synergy within the government ministries and research institutes, but also is a starting point for synergy between the government and the greater public. As shown from the research, the landscape of evidence based policy making involves many stakeholders, including those outside of the government such as politicians, researchers and middle layer organizations. Sammio is the building block for the government to work with other stakeholders. By creating a space where users can understand government strategies and research done, the public will be able to better monitor and participate in the discourse of government decision making.

6. DISCUSSION

The future prospects of Sammio is largely dependant on whether the service gains popularity within the government and government research institutes. The goal is to make Sammio the go-to search engine for civil servants who are looking for information to make evidence based decisions. The proposed service is just a small step in the direction of making government evidence based decision making better.

The success of Sammio relies on a few main factors. Firstly, Sammio requires active user participation to work. Even though the information in Sammio are mostly grabbed automatically through from the web, some critical information (especially that of personal details) require users to actively contribute and update. Secondly, Sammio is a new way of learning, meaning that adoption of the platform as a tool for evidence based policy making will take time. Thirdly, an owner will be needed to take charge of Sammio. The owner should be responsible for developing, monitoring and advertising the Sammio platform. Having an owner for Sammio is vital because platforms not only require maintenance, but active updating and development to make services coherent and responsive to the needs of the users.

DEVELOPMENT PHASES

Sammio's development will take place in a three distinct phases, each taking up to a year. If the development of Sammio would begin in 2015, Sammio will be launched before the summer of 2018. Our group believe that launching Sammio one year before the next Finnish parliamentary elections will give the platform enough time to gain attention from within in the government and in the public to make it into the agenda of the new government.

PHASES 1

In the first phase, a platform must be built with Sammio's basic search service built in. Collaboration with government ministries and government research institutes is vital at this stage to make Sammio compatible with the government websites. Sammio must be able to grab information from the databases from the individual ministries and research institutes to create an index that will be searchable. The goal of phase 1 is to have a beta version of Sammio with basic services launched for trial and test use.

PHASE 2

The second phase is a trail and feedback phase where selected users sample the unfinished platform. In software development, this stage is also known as beta testing phase. At this point, the

main services of Sammio should be completed, but not necessarily polished. There should be, if not all, most reports and project information of the government already indexed in the database. The goal of this stage is to get feedback from users using Sammio on how to improve the user experience and what new services to include. During this phase, algorithms should be written to better capture themes and phenomena based topics from user search data and government strategies. The owners of Sammio should also begin securing partner ministries and institutes who would commit to using Sammio for a period of time after the launch.

PHASE 3

The third phase marks the official launch of Sammio. Partner ministries and research institutes will also officially begin using Sammio as their organizational tool for searching and gather information. The goal of phase 3 is to popularize Sammio with the government, making Sammio the go-to platform for information searching. If Sammio proves to be a popular tool by civil servants, the government may endorse it as an official program used by all ministries and research institutes.

7. LINKS

This links were available 2/06/2015

Information visualization

Visualized facts of the world population
<http://www.gapminder.org/>

Interactive visualization and exploration platform
<http://gephi.github.io/>

Interactive mapping software
<http://www.instantatlas.com/>

Trends in civic tech visualization
<http://www.knightfoundation.org/features/civictech>

Visualization on country-level development outcomes
<http://openindia.worldbankgroup.org/#!/overview>

Visual tool for data analysis
<http://www.tableau.com/products/desktop>

Tool for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks
<http://www.vosviewer.com/Home>

McCandless D. (2010) The beauty of data visualization
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLqjQ55tz-U>

JavaScript library for information visualization
<http://d3js.org/>

Connection and relationships maps

Observatory Economy Complexity project
<https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/explore/network/hs/export/usa/all/show/2012/>

Kumu, harness the power of relations
<https://kumu.io/>

Legislative Explorer
<http://legex.org/>

Mapping software
<http://vibrantdata.is/>

Organizational Intranets

IBM Case
<https://www-03.ibm.com/press/us/en/pressrelease/19156.wss>

How the "Google Effect" Is Transforming Employee Communications and Driving Employee Engagement REPORT
<https://robertoigarza.files.wordpress.com/2008/11/rep-how-the-google-effect-is-transforming-employee-communications-ww-2006.pdf>

Platforms and websites related to governmental communication

Catalog of open datasets, interoperability tools and guidelines - See more at:
<https://www.avoindata.fi/en>

Connecting local public services with innovators and ideas to solve social problems
<http://www.simpl.co/>

Access to datasets in various fields via a joint meta data model
<http://etsin.avointiede.fi/>

International Prospective register of systematic reviews
<http://www.crd.york.ac.uk/PROSPERO/>

The home of the U.S. Government's open data
<http://www.data.gov/>

Design for Europe
<http://designforeurope.eu/news-opinion/value-design-public-sector>

Finnish University and Research Network
<https://info.funet.fi/wiki/display/avoin/Etusivu>

UK Governmental website
www.gov.uk

Finnish Government project database
<http://www.hare.vn.fi/>

Digital Repository of the University of Helsinki
<https://helda.helsinki.fi/>

<http://www.helsinki.designlab.org/>

<http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/>

High-quality historical research freely accessible online
<http://www.historyandpolicy.org>

Helsinki Region Infoshare
<http://www.hri.fi/en/open-data/>

Open publications archive for the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
<https://www.julkari.fi/>

Cross-governmental innovation unit
<http://mind-lab.dk/en/>

Non-profit network
<https://okfn.org/>

Open data for the city of Glasgow
<http://open.glasgow.gov.uk/>

Site promoting research information availability in Finland
<http://openscience.fi/about>

Research projects focusing on natural resources
<http://www.projectnet.fi/>

Gateway to Finnish education, research and innovation
<http://www.research.fi/en>

Other

Atlas Game Information
<http://atlas-research.fi/>

Näyttöön perustuva päätöksenteko
<http://vnk.fi/julkaisu?pubid=2220>

Project coordinated by (IDRC)
<http://www.opendataresearch.org/>

Statistics of Finland information
http://www.stat.fi/index_en.html

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Sustainability**