eHealth in a caring society – Brechtje Walburgh Schmidt (Movisie Nl)
Abstract Care&Caring: Future proofing the new demographics'
5 september 2015

Research shows that it makes people feel happy to care a little for someone else. But how does one limit this to 'a little'? How can tasks be shared as well as possible? And what digital developments can play a role? Where do they add value? Which values need to be sustained in our future development?

A characteristic issue of our times is how to find a balance in time spent caring for others: a little will make one feel good, but too much brings misery. There is a growing need for proper matching and collaboration between the options of self-help, family care, volunteering, neighbourhood support and citizens initiatives on the one side, and formal care on the other. And in order to achieve the best possible collaboration a number of practical issues need to be dealt with. Family members often live far apart, communication with multiple carers may be complex, and what is needed to ensure that enthusiastic volunteers connect with the right people in a safe way?

If people live independently longer, it is important to have proper coordination and balanced care. Online technology can contribute to better sharing of care and to simpler ways of communication. In the division ICT & Informal care of the Informal Care Centre of Expertise we study the conditions, the characteristics and the criteria for digital support in the future interaction between formal and informal care.

The inventory we made in 2014 shows a growing number of online platforms and means of communication in the Dutch market, focusing on parts of issues, sometimes offering support or even solutions. Analysis of the various tools leads to a differentiation in solutions: digital platforms to facilitate communication around an individual (23+), digital applications (39+) and online (eBay) marketplaces (14+). This differentiation is not yet final. Other forms, combinations and approaches emerge and are being developed by both non-profit and commercial parties. For this reason it is all the more important that an independent centre of expertise studies which elements work, what makes an application accessible and useful, or not.

In the follow-up study in 2015 we are collecting the experiences of end users (elderly, patients, family carers, professional carers) with these online solutions. And we map the various stakeholders that play crucial roles in the Netherlands in the successful implementation of new technology. Unfortunately the results are not yet available, but we can see a few things.
   1. There are definitely different ways of organising formal and informal care. Some networks choose to use interfaces like WhatsApp or other 'normal' apps, where other networks choose to use a system especially designed for that network (or an adaption to their needs).
   2. For most users the use of technology in organising formal & informal care is time saving, because appointments can be made together and messages can be transferred easily. Many users acknowledge that the used systems or mediums create a stronger social relation not only between care recipient and informal carer, but also between formal and informal carers.
   3. Because the used systems show more than only appointments or visits from the family, but carers can also upload pictures of 'everyday moments' or special moments like the Eastern breakfast table for example, the informal carers get more insight in the day-to-day actions and experiences of their beloved.
As said, we are currently working on several articles about end user experiences. When available we'll upload them on the website of the Informal Care Centre of Expertise. www.expertisecentrummantelzorg.nl)
One example we would like to show you is Familienet: www.thefamilynet.co.uk
We are very proud of our contribution to the eHealth cocreation book, you can find the translated chapter here: https://www.movisie.com/news/ehealth-caring-society

eHealth in a caring society

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Care&Caring: Future proofing the new demographics'

Carers Conference: 4 september 2015

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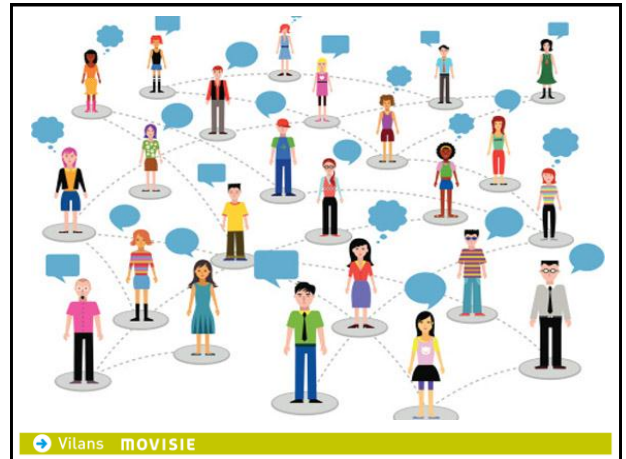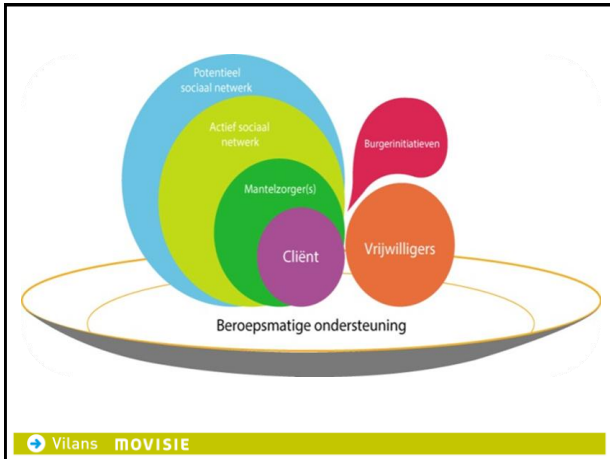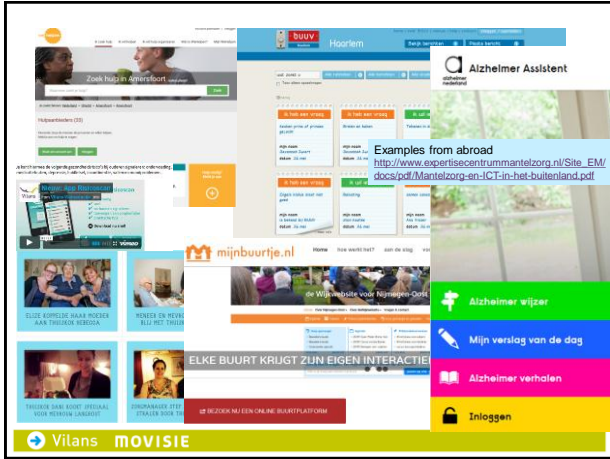

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Digital caring: three variations

- Digital platforms to facilitate communication around an individual;
- Digital applications;
- Online marketplaces.

- Combinations of the above

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End user experiences

- Whatsapp < – > specifically designed systems

- Positive effects (1) – time saving, information sharing, etc.

- Positive effects (2) – strenghtening the relations of formal & informal carers

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Family net (familienet)

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www.thefamilynet.co.uk

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Available in English

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Thank you!

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