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To cite this Article / Käytä viittauksessa alkuperäistä lähdettä:

Mäkelä, L. 2017. Experiments continue with Mediapolis co-studio. Teoksessa Leena Mäkelä (toim.). MEDAIA : experimenting open innovation in the media field. Tampere: Tampere University of Applied Sciences. Series B, Reports 91, 74-79.

DOI / URL: <http://julkaisut.tamk.fi/PDF-tiedostot-web/B/91-MEDAIA-Experimenting-Open-Innovation-in-the-Media-Field.pdf>

EXPERIMENTS CONTINUE WITH MEDIAPOLIS CO-STUDIO

Leena Mäkelä

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE MEDAIA PROJECT

in the Tampere Region was to increase the innovation readiness of Mediapolis by executing small-scale experiments. When the project started, the key actors of Mediapolis had just moved into the premises. The vision of innovation at Mediapolis was still in progress and it wasn't yet clear what collaborative innovation meant for the different actors of Mediapolis.

During the course of the project, the ecosystem of Mediapolis has evolved as ecosystems do. There has not been a centralized system for guiding the activities of the actors. Instead, there have been many nodes, which have simultaneously enhanced the innovation structures at Mediapolis. MEDAIA has been one of the nodes with an academic emphasis due to TAMK's involvement in the project. This article summarizes the results of MEDAIA, and introduces Co-Studio, a project and a concept for continuing activities started by MEDAIA.



THE INITIATOR OF MEDIAPOLIS

(see website: <http://mediapolis.fi>) was the Finnish Broadcasting Company Yle, that wanted to increase its cooperation with its partners and to promote the vitality of creative industries in the Tampere Region. The City of Tampere also included Mediapolis as a part of its own strategy, and thus the media center was established in 2013. The premises owned by Yle were taken over by Technopolis, a Finnish company that owns and develops 20 smart business parks in the Nordic-Baltic region. The first companies and TAMK moved to the premises in autumn 2014.

The academic section of Mediapolis is strong. In addition to TAMK's degree programmes in the fields of arts and media, Tampere Vocational College Tredu's Study Programme in Audio-Visual Communication is also located in the center. In spring 2016, the key actors Yle, TAMK, Technopolis, Aito Media and Aito Tehdas founded the Mediapolis Cooperative for promoting the cooperation between its members and for enabling joint business operations. Later the cooperative admitted additional members. Now there are over 30 organizations and 1000 people studying and working in Mediapolis every day.

From the very beginning, the actors of Mediapolis have aimed at providing joint media production services to third partners. For this purpose, the expertise of the production companies and the technical facilities at the center, including fully equipped broadcasting-grade studios, are excellent. Mediapolis also provides venues for events and conferences. For families, the center has been a beloved location to visit because the most popular Finnish children's TV show "Pikku Kakkonen" has been produced there since 1977. Media

tourism is one of the fields under development in cooperation with the City of Tampere, and pilots have been carried out for developing new kinds of audience tours for paying customers. Mediapolis Accelerator was established in spring 2017 for fostering new media businesses: 14 media startups were selected to the accelerator programme commissioned by the City of Tampere and operated by Digital Media Finland.

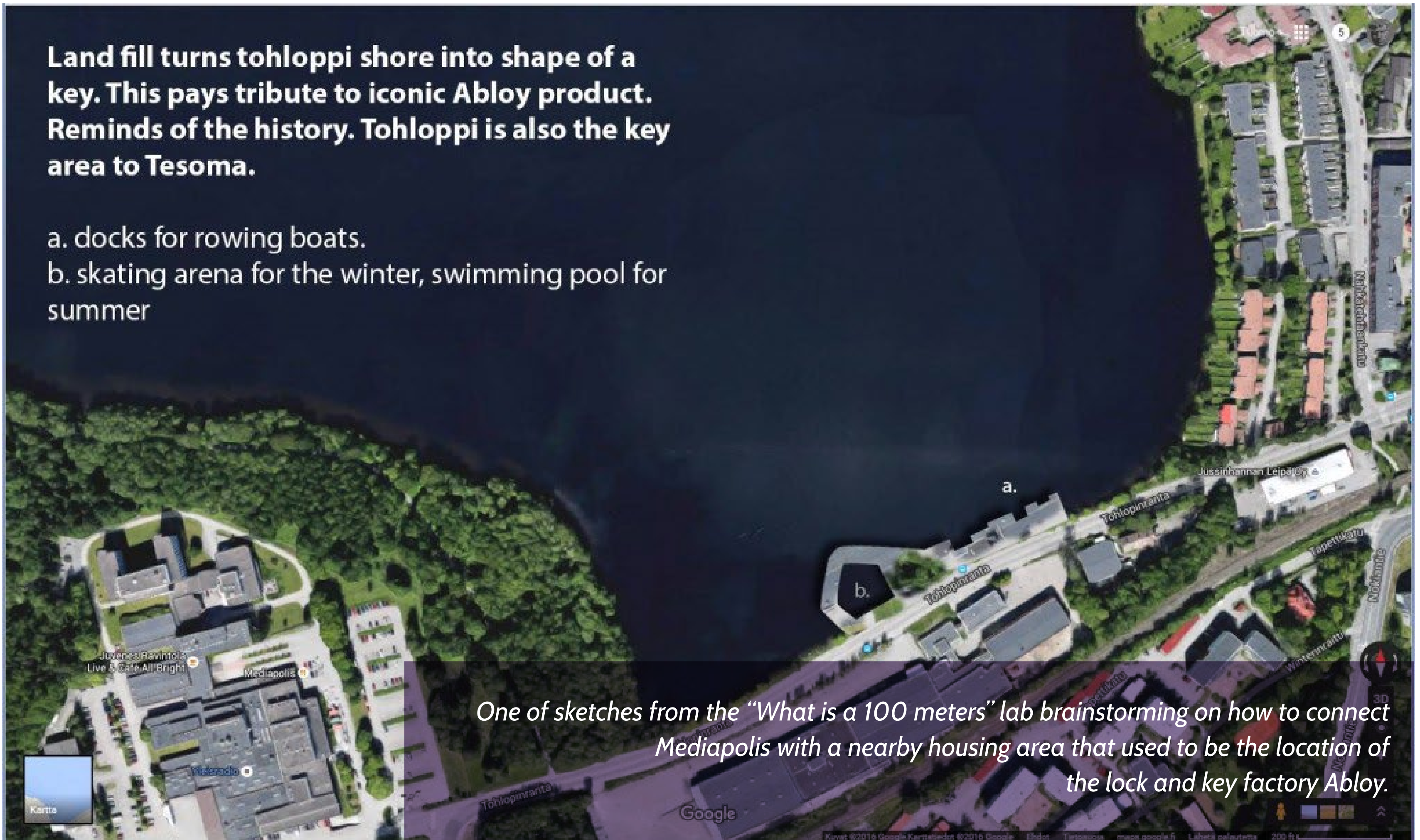
The starting point of the MEDAIA project was to carry out practical small-scale projects for developing open innovation in Mediapolis. The activities of MEDAIA were planned in dialogue with the key persons of the Mediapolis Cooperative. In the beginning of the project, there were discussions on whether a common innovation platform, "Mediapolis Lab", would be necessary. The common innovation system was not yet seen as a topical objective. It was more relevant to focus on practical experiments and to learn from them.

EIGHT EXPERIMENTS IN TAMPERE

Altogether, MEDAIA designed and executed eight experiments (see website: <http://medaia.tamk.fi/en/>) in the Tampere region. Four of them addressed urban innovation and were realized in collaboration with the City of Tampere's Oma Tesoma project. As part of the Six City Strategy, the Oma Tesoma project has developed a citizen-driven innovation platform in the Tesoma neighborhoods, where Mediapolis, too, is located. Therefore, it was natural for MEDAIA activities to take place in Tesoma. The four other experiments of MEDAIA addressed innovation activity development at Mediapolis, and included collaboration with the project partner Metropolia UAS in Helsinki.

Land fill turns tohloppi shore into shape of a key. This pays tribute to iconic Abloy product. Reminds of the history. Tohloppi is also the key area to Tesoma.

- a. docks for rowing boats.
- b. skating arena for the winter, swimming pool for summer



The different themes – urban development and Mediapolis – were separate in the beginning of the MEDAIA project. During the project, however, the themes started to converge. It became evident that media and media technologies are becoming more and more integrated in urban innovation and development. Particularly prominent fields turned out to be extended reality (XR) including virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and mixed reality (MR) which provide opportunities to, e.g., model environments before they are built. This topic is also discussed earlier on in this publication by Jimmy Paquet-Cormier in his article 'Extended Urbanity'.

It was during the first year of the project that virtual reality came forth as a new commercially feasible application field at Mediapolis. The forerunner was the micro company Rakka Creative, which started to get clients for its 360° video productions. TAMK also started to

cooperate with Nokia Technologies (OZO VR 360° video experiments) at Mediapolis. In the fall 2016, it was decided that the Mediapolis Cooperative and the MEDAIA project would boost VR development by organizing an international conference and workshop on VR. These two events were organized in April 2017 as a part of TAMK's International Week at Mediapolis. As described earlier in this publication, VR was also tested in a media tourism context. The last experiment of MEDAIA, 'VR Sprint', extended VR creation beyond 360° video and into interactive simulations using Unity technology. The sprint was carried out in close cooperation with Virtual Reality Finland, client companies operating in the VR field and TAMK's Business Information Systems Programme. The sprint became an excellent showcase for understanding what kinds of collaboration methods and networks are needed at Mediapolis for occupying new application fields in the media industry.

Neighborhood experiments also generated new networks. The Six City Strategy program has established an excellent local and national network for discussing the means of urban development. In April 2016, together with the European Network of Living Labs, ENoLL, MEDAIA organized a 'Citizen-Driven City' workshop at the Design and the City conference in Amsterdam. The workshop brought together researchers and designers to discuss how citizens can be involved in city planning in creative ways. Creative city design was also the theme of the 'What is a 100 meters?' experiment organized in Mediapolis. In the two-day international City Lab event, seven European universities brainstormed together on how Mediapolis could be connected to a housing area located very near to its premises. The common result of the aforementioned national and international activities is that urban development has become a relevant research and development field at TAMK's Mediapolis campus. Since fall 2017, TAMK has been collaborating with Laurea, XAMK and the Finnish Association of Designers, Ornamo, on a national City Drivers project that aims to increase citizen-centered innovation skills among the creative industries. The international network of TAMK's partner universities is also planning a joint project for researching and experimenting art- and media-based creative practices in citizen-centered and inclusive urban development.

COMMUNITY BUILDING IS CRUCIAL

At the moment, Mediapolis is a cluster of audiovisual media industry in the Tampere region. In Finland, audiovisual industry is heavily concentrated in the capital region.

Although Tampere is the second biggest hub, the audiovisual industry in the region is small. According to Statistics Finland (2017), in 2015 there were 138 establishments and a total of 163 persons working in the category of 'motion picture, video and television programme production, sound recording and music publishing activities'. When broadcasters (e.g. Yle) were included, the number of establishments in the audiovisual industry was 146 with a total of 233 persons. The digital media industry is much bigger in the Tampere Region. In 2015, the amount of software development and consultancy establishments under the category 'Information and communication' (Statistics Finland, 2017) was 702 establishments with a total of 5080 persons.

The development of the media ecosystem and the enforcement of the audiovisual industry in the Tampere region are included in the vision of Mediapolis. Due to its practical orientation, the MEDAIA project has contributed to building this ecosystem on a micro level and has continuously received positive feedback about the project activities from stakeholders, collaborators and participants. An important lesson learned during the project is that community building is a very crucial element in the development of innovation activities. Community building is not a direct tool for innovating and commercializing products or services but it is a crucial process in creating an environment which continuously generates novel ideas, open innovation partnerships and commercially viable products and services. TAMK, as an academic organization, has a specific role in developing the innovation community of Mediapolis. While companies

are often tied to their specific business sectors and clients, universities can cooperate with multiple collaborators. As a multidisciplinary organization, TAMK can operate as an intermediary between content creators and technology providers, as has happened in the VR field. TAMK runs international degree programmes and works within a wide European partner network, and therefore, TAMK has also had a strong impact on internationalization of Mediapolis from the very beginning. As a research organization, TAMK has the resources and know-how to initiate and manage regional, national and international development projects. The most valuable asset of TAMK at Mediapolis are, however, the students. Students are potential employees for the companies, they are potential entrepreneurs and they are innovators and actors enhancing experimental

culture and energetic community building in Mediapolis.

In general, it is extremely important to understand the various objectives and roles of the different key partners in order to define how each organization can contribute in creating value for Mediapolis and how Mediapolis can create value for the individual organizations. Active role mapping is crucial for sustainable development. The more the individual organizations can connect the development of Mediapolis to their everyday activities, the more sustainable the development is. Developing the international innovation community of Mediapolis is well aligned with TAMK's basic mission as an educator and a RDI actor promoting the development of regional working life.



PICTURE: LEENA MÄKELÄ

CO-STUDIO CONTINUES WITH COMMUNITY BUILDING AT MEDIAPOLIS

In spring 2017, MEDAIA interviewed media company professionals operating at Mediapolis about the kind of cooperation they would like to have with students (Hiltunen 2017). The results showed that companies wanted to cooperate with students more, also in their innovation activities. A common problem was that they did not know how to find students whose skills matched with their project needs. They also wished that TAMK's lecturers would act as matchmakers between them and the students.

The study raised a question of how the educational organizations of Mediapolis, TAMK and Tampere Vocational College Tredu could improve the linking and collaboration between the students and employers. Informally this matchmaking is common, e.g. in project-based learning in client projects, but it is not a formal part of lectures. On the regional level, there is a similar kind of need for matching companies and media professionals. A strong local network of media professionals will become extremely important if Tampere succeeds in attracting big national and international audiovisual productions.

One attempt to strengthen this network is the Co-Studio project, that started in September 2017 at Mediapolis. Co-Studio is carried out by TAMK and Tredu, and funded by the Council of Tampere Region. The goal of the project is to create a regional network of actors and to experiment and develop new co-operation models for improving employment in the media field.

Co-Studio is targeted especially to media and culture students who are in the final phase of their studies. Another target group are the alumni of TAMK and Tredu seeking job opportunities in the field of media in the Tampere Region. The third group are employers and companies, with whom new cooperation models are experimented. There will be close collaboration with regional public employment and business services that also experiment and seek new solutions for enhancing employment and entrepreneurship.



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MEDAIA



The objective of the MEDAIA project was to develop open innovation in a media business and urban innovation context. This was to be achieved by carrying out 13 small-scale pilot projects, i.e. experiments, that demonstrate new collaboration models between universities, companies, the public sector and other organizations.

The publication consists of articles written by authors who participated in the MEDAIA project. It introduces background studies conducted for the project and experiments that were carried out by following agile methodologies. It also sheds light on new media technologies - virtual and extended reality - that became important application fields of the innovation activities.

MEDAIA project was coordinated by Tampere University of Applied Sciences and Metropolia University of Applied Sciences in partnership with Yle, the Finnish Broadcasting Company. MEDAIA was granted by the Finnish national Six City Strategy program and funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

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