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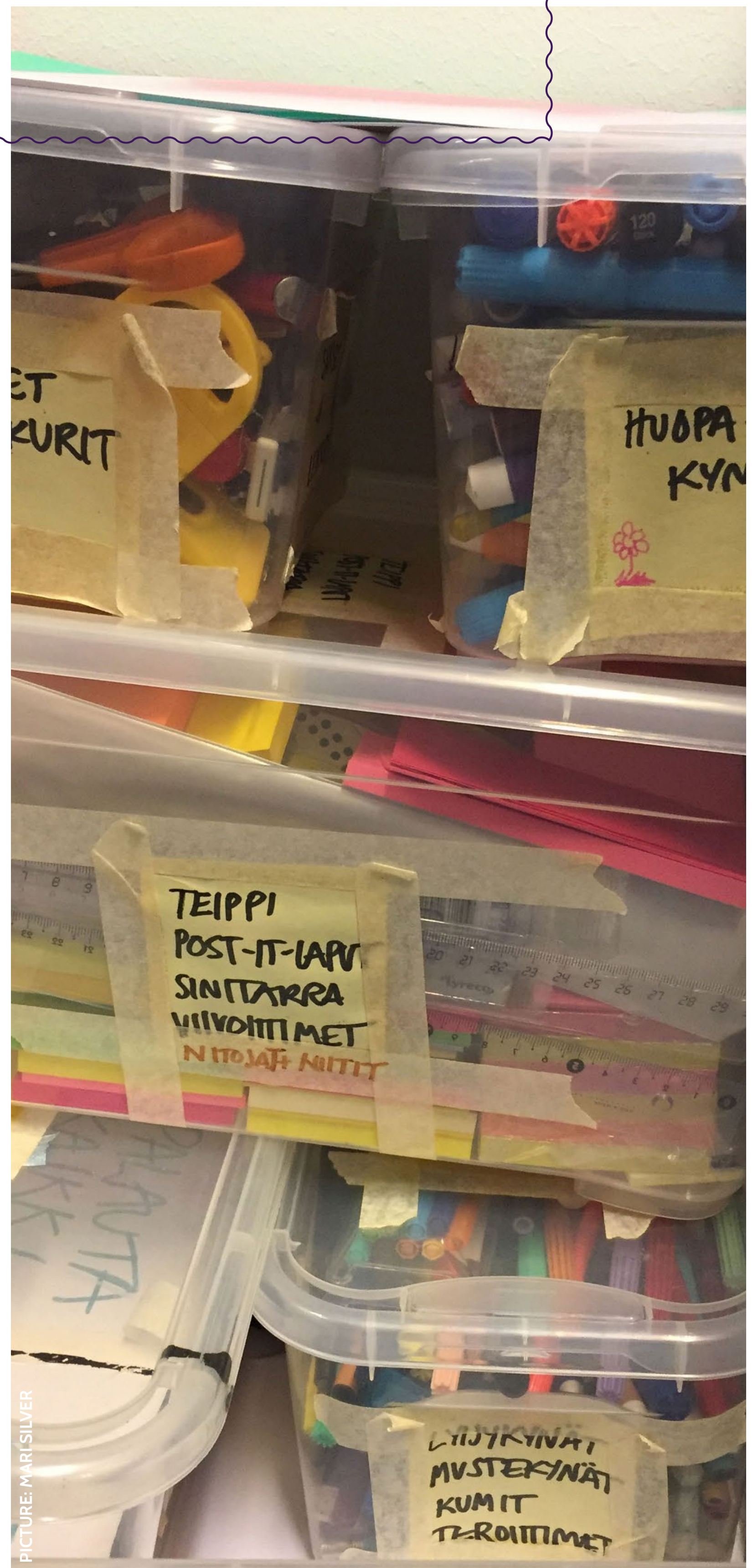
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ARABIANRANTA HACKATHON – A CITY DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT EXPERIMENT

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THE COLLISION OF VARIOUS ACTORS

and local city development inside the innovation networks has been one of the objectives of the MEDAIA project. Thus, to focus on the grassroots development of the Arabianranta district and to explore how local innovation projects can contribute to the city development processes, MEDAIA organised a fast collision experiment in March 2017 at Metropolia's facilities in Arabianranta. The chosen concept for the fast collision was Hackathon because it is a multi-field process that allows for various local actors to collide and to develop grassroots solutions to grassroots problems in an open and inspiring atmosphere where no idea is deemed 'bad' or unworthy.



PICTURE: MARI SILVER

AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH HACKATHON,

the participants are encouraged to collaborate as a real-world problem is introduced to them. Consequently, the participants get to know each other's areas of expertise and then map out solutions to the problem(s) utilizing those various expertise and different concepts. Arabianranta Hackathon is one of the MEDAIA and Metropolia projects aiming to turn and develop Arabianranta into an area that would be welcoming for people to spend time, work and organize cultural events in.

Currently, the beautiful and culturally interesting area is not being utilized to its full potential. Arabianranta is a home to various companies, organizations and schools, and has a beautiful scenery, but it is highly underused as people don't spend their free time there but instead move over to other areas in Helsinki after work and their classes. Arabianranta is not 'cool' or lively. Metropolia strives to change this negative perception by facilitating different local area development activities.

Arabianranta Hackathon was able to bring together actors such as students, NGOs and companies who live, study and/or work in the area, and to create multi-field solutions that could be used to develop Arabianranta towards its full potential as a lively, safe and culturally inspiring area to work and to spend time in. The Hackathon was inspired by the idea of open space, and focused on developing new ideas and cooperation opportunities and services that could make everyday life easier for those living and working in the area. The participants at the Hackathon were students and local actors from Arabianranta invited there by the outside facilitator of the Hackathon.

At MEDAIA's Hackathon, the problem under discussion was: how to make Arabianranta more lively and welcoming for various groups of people to work, visit and stay in, and how to encourage cooperation between various actors, such as students and organizations who work, study and live in the area. After the facilitator-led introduction, the participants were divided into smaller groups in order to facilitate focused multi-field problem-solving and to create real cooperation between different actors coming from varying backgrounds.

There were four small groups that had 3-4 members in them. In the small groups, each member introduced themselves and their personal expertise that could be utilized in the local development projects. These skills varied from IT and arts to sports and local event organizing. Each group created a concept and/or product that could be marketed and used locally for developing the Arabianranta area. The aim of each concept was to operate as a real-world solution for creating a more vital, inspiring and lively Arabianranta area by working together with various actors.

During the last hour of the Hackathon, the facilitator asked each group to present their local area development concepts to the other groups. These four concepts were artistic and multidisciplinary. Many students who participated in the Hackathon stated in the beginning of the project that they had ideas for events in Arabianranta but no resources to produce them. Thus, the students hoped for much more cooperation between students and local organizations and companies who have the ways and the means, e.g. venues and spaces, for creating events.



PICTURE: NIINA MERILÄINEN

The actual concept examples created during the Hackathon varied from student-elderly Art Afternoons and nature walks that would also be suitable for people with physical disabilities, to organizations and companies working together at after-work playdate sessions, and to evening hop-in-and-out music and sport festivals organized by students and local businesses and held in the picture-perfect Arabianranta nature.

It was interesting to observe that the common theme in each of the concepts was that actors from various background would work together to reach the same goal. Students

with a background in IT or arts would develop the concept and companies would be able to participate and sell their products/services, and even to create co-marketed products/services with the students. One small but locally important innovation developed during the Hackathon was to build new lamps beside the roads and parks of Arabianranta, so that sport and cultural events could be organized later in the evening and also during the winter time. When it's not so dark, people are not afraid to go out – what a simple but locally significant innovation to create possibilities for late-evening events that would welcome participants from various backgrounds!

The aim of the Hackathon was to empower local actors and to generate multidisciplinary and multi-field problem-solving that is innovative by nature and that addresses local problems. Hackathons rely on experienced facilitators and in this experiment by MEDAIA, they were able to inspire and to get people involved, especially when the participants might at first be hesitant to cooperate with actors coming from completely different backgrounds.

The results of the Hackathon tell MEDAIA that various ideas worth developing into usable concepts are often swept aside due to there not being enough resources, such as time of space, to develop them. The results also show that various actors wish for cooperation with other operators but struggle to find each other, even locally. If Metropolia aims to create more cooperation locally, Hackathon is a usable concept for bringing different actors together and for creating solutions for local problems. With Hackathon, the participants understood the value of multi-field cooperation and how

the problem-solving development with various actors can be inspiring and thought-provoking, which in the end creates locally and culturally inspiring solutions for local problems such as the development of Arabianranta.

