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## **Challenges of collaboration: the case of Mediapolis in Finland**

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**Abstract.** This chapter discusses the development of a media cluster called *Mediapolis* in Tampere, Finland, during its initial years. Mediapolis is a brownstone, real estate creative cluster project that combines public and private organisations in cross-sector collaboration. Mediapolis is situated in the premises formerly owned by the *Finnish Broadcasting Company, Yle*. Mediapolis aims to create value through collaborative media innovation and new content creation. The development of Mediapolis is strongly supported by Tampere City and regional authorities. The qualitative case study reflects on opportunities and challenges of clusters as tools for collaboration. The case study illustrates complications in developing media clusters based on collaborative value between the participating organisations rather than on spatial arrangements (as the traditional understanding of clusters). The case study revealed organisational tensions that emerge through dualities between (1) private and public organisational orientations, (2) ideal planning and practical actions, and (3) individual organisations' self-interest and collective interest for collaboration. The case study results show the importance for urban planners, local policy makers and creative cluster managers of anticipating, identifying and managing various organisational tensions in media cluster development.

**Keywords.** Media cluster, cross-sector collaboration, dualities, Mediapolis, tensions.

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## Introduction

The media industry as part of the creative and cultural industries, is highly clustered because media production is fundamentally collaborative in nature (Achtenhagen & Picard, 2014; Davis, et al., 2009). Further, the media industry is increasingly reliant on networked collaboration in value-creating and value-adding webs of organisations (Baumann, 2013; Bilton, 2011). Collaboration is inevitable, because not even the largest companies are able to maintain the necessary resources and knowledge in-house in the rapidly changing operational contexts. Therefore, the success of the media industry depends on the quality and amount of collaboration across organisational boundaries (Lowe & Yamamoto, 2016).

However, media clusters (as sub-form of creative clusters) as mere spatial agglomerations of organisations and institutions are no straightforward guarantee for achieving collaboration in media content production (Virta & Lowe, 2017) (see also Chapter 11). Collaboration features inherent complexities and tensions, which make the process uncertain and complicated (Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2015). This is a relevant aspect for media cluster research, because collaboration in clusters is a key prerequisite for success (Virta & Lowe, 2017) (see also Chapter 8 for more insights about collaboration in creative clusters). However, within-cluster collaboration has rarely been the focus of interest in media cluster research. Hence, this chapter discusses the development of a new media cluster and elaborates on characteristic complexities and tensions of collaboration in this regard. Accordingly, this chapter focuses on a case study of a media cluster called *Mediapolis* in Tampere, Finland. The focus is on the development and early operational phase of Mediapolis. Characteristic complications of media cluster development are illustrated by answering the research question: What tensions of collaboration emerge in a newly formed media cluster, and why?

The chapter is structured as follows: first, an introduction to the case study is given using the 7P framework and cluster typology elaborated in Chapter 1 to illustrate the Mediapolis case. Next, relevant literature and the core concepts of the study are discussed. This is followed by a description of the methods of the study. The research findings are presented, and then discussed. Finally, a conclusion that summarises the study and offers ideas for future research wraps up the chapter.

## Mediapolis' history and characteristics

The case study in this chapter focuses on a media cluster called Mediapolis in Finland. On its website, Mediapolis is characterised as “a centre of storytelling and digital industries” (Mediapolis, 2019). The cluster is located in Tampere, which is the third largest city of Finland. The premises are situated in a district called *Tohloppi* around seven kilometres to the west from Tampere city centre.

Mediapolis development started in concrete terms in 2011 but is explained by earlier events and features intersecting interests. Mediapolis was initiated by *Yle*, the Finnish Broadcasting Company, which is the public broadcaster of Finland. *Yle* has operated in *Tohloppi* since 1970s. A few years into the new millennium, *Yle* considered withdrawing its operations from *Tohloppi* as one of several future scenarios for cost savings. The plan made the Tampere City and broader Pirkanmaa region authorities concerned. Their motivation to preserve *Yle* in *Tohloppi* correlated with the regional industrial development plan of *Creative Tampere* that was operational in 2006-2011, as well as the city's strategy.

In early 2010s, *Yle*'s renewed strategy focused on openness. It included increasing public-private collaboration with external partners aiming at innovation in content and services and reducing *Yle*'s real estate ownership. Accordingly, *Tohloppi* premises were sold to the international real estate development company *Technopolis* in 2012. The premises were fully renovated in 2013. Long-term rental contracts with *Yle* and *TAMK* (*Tampere University of Applied Sciences*) were part of the original deal, and later a third large tenant, *Tredu* (*Tampere Vocational College, media branch*) was included in the package.

The first private production companies moved to Mediapolis 'campus' in autumn 2014. To support the start of Mediapolis operations development, Tampere City provided 750,000€ of EU funding. An unofficial board between the main Mediapolis partners (including *Yle*, *Technopolis*, *TAMK*, and Tampere City) was formed to govern the finance, shape the vision and lead the collaborative development of Mediapolis. In early 2019, around 30 companies and organisations rent space at the premises. Approximately half of them are media companies. Mediapolis offers up-to-date media production facilities. Firms and institutions at Mediapolis share closely located offices and other spaces including a restaurant-cafe.

Mediapolis combines public and private organisations. The aim is innovation in content, formats, programmes, media technology and operational models through collaboration. In January 2016, the main partners founded a legal entity in the form of a co-operative company for Mediapolis man-

agement and coordination purposes. The core aim was to find solutions to uncertainties and tensions, which had unearthed in relation to shared operations in Mediapolis' development. The co-operative was expected to provide tools for supporting collaboration in practice. It was also expected to generate revenue and sustain itself, at least partly, as a business later. Yle representative was nominated the Chair of the Mediapolis co-operative.

Applying the 7P framework (see Chapter 1), the parameter of *place* can be considered as the determining factor in classifying Mediapolis to cluster types (cf. Komorowski, 2017). The place was determined by Yle's historic presence on site. However, Tampere is not a major international city, and Mediapolis is not located in the centre of Tampere. Thus, the place has been a constant issue in Mediapolis development, for example in relation to traffic connections and zoning. Place is also at the core of Technopolis strategy and operations as a real estate operator. As a brownstone project, the Mediapolis real estate was not purpose-built for the cluster, but it was renovated to become one (see Chapter 15 for more brownstone cluster discussion). This connects Mediapolis especially to the real estate and the giant anchor cluster types (see Chapter 1). Yle is the major commissioner for the independent production companies acting as the giant anchor (cf. Komorowski, 2017).

Second, as is typical for giant anchors and real estate clusters (see Chapter 1), Mediapolis is highly influenced by the parameter of *path-dependency* (cf. Komorowski, 2017). Yle's plans to leave Tampere raised severe local and regional political concerns, and public support for its development is strong. However, path-dependencies of the large public organisations at Mediapolis have challenged collaboration development of the cluster. Their established ways of working and making decisions hinder collaborative operations development because the cluster itself does not have decision-making mandate or power to act independently.

The third parameter, *proximity*, is a crucial success factor for creating collaborative value in Mediapolis. Significant effort has been made to enhance proximity by arranging joint events or working together in the previous unofficial board and later in the Mediapolis co-operative. However, proximity in physical agglomeration terms (topographical/spatial proximity in Komorowski, 2016) cannot substitute for proximity in collaboration terms (topological proximity in Komorowski, 2016). The latter gets emphasised in relation to innovation potential, because density in clusters does not substitute for intensity of relationships (Virta & Lowe, 2017).

Next, in terms of *population*, Mediapolis reached its targets ahead of schedule. Most rental premises were occupied several years before the aim

set for 2020. The original goal of 1,000 people on campus by 2015 was considered ambitious, but the goal was well surpassed. In March 2016, 1,888 individual Mediapolis access passes were active. However, the relevance of the cluster participants varies. The largest tenants, Yle, TAMK and Tredu, are of the most significant importance to Technopolis as the real estate operator. This has hindered the development of the cluster as a whole, because the smaller collaboration partners have been disappointed with the emphasised focus on large organisations.

In relation to the *profile* parameter, the size of the participating organisations affects Mediapolis development. The smaller, agile organisations are important for their ability to react quickly, and the larger, path-dependent organisations typically hinder possibilities for rapid co-creation opportunities. At Mediapolis, Yle's role was crucial in initiating the cluster, but its role is also considered too decisive for a balanced development. For example, Yle is the main buyer of content from independent production companies, which makes them compete. Yle is also considered unpredictable in its actions towards the independent production sector, for example in relation to short-term and frequently changing content commissions and acquisitions.

*Policy* issues are central for Mediapolis development, in particular the decision to sell the Mediapolis premises to Technopolis. The aim was to avoid Yle leaving Tohloppi and to direct Yle to increase collaborative content production with independent production companies. Policy decisions also directed financial (EU-funds) and other resources like consultancy or improved traffic connections towards Mediapolis. Alongside external policy-based support, internal self-regulating structures have complicated Mediapolis' development. This is due to an over-emphasis on creating operational governance structures on a meta-level instead of focusing on actual collaboration structures and opportunities on site. After several development cycles and projects, the Mediapolis co-operative was established. The shared management structure and arrangement was considered necessary for developing joint innovation and collaborative value.

The desired added value of Mediapolis collaboration is innovation in media content, formats and production by working together as partners in the cluster. This can be linked to *performance*, the last parameter in the 7P framework. Collaboration has intensified between Yle and the schools, TAMK and Tredu, i.e. the public-sector organisations in the cluster. However, cross-sector collaboration across Mediapolis partners is still underdeveloped. Despite notable progress in getting the cluster running, attracting tenants and forming organisational arrangements for advancing cluster op-

erations, Mediapolis has not met its targets especially in relation to everyday collaboration and joint innovation.

The centrality of collaboration and innovation in Mediapolis' goals suggests connections to the cluster type Attracting Enabler. Mediapolis is expected to attract both media entrepreneurs and educational institutions. Further, the Yle 'openness' strategy promises a wide and uncomplicated access to high quality production facilities for cluster members and their network. In practice, Mediapolis operations, the strategy has been easier to plan than implement, and the cluster has not met the set aims as an Attracting Enabler. This is due to the dominant characteristics of Mediapolis, but also to organisational complexities and complications in collaboration development, which are at the core of the case analysis in this chapter.

## **Collaborations, dualities and tensions**

Spatial agglomeration is expected to create mutual advantages between cluster partners, as illustrated in Porter's (2000) seminal understanding of industry clusters. However, media industries rely significantly on talent, and media products, i.e. content and services, are largely intangible, which requires widening the traditional understanding of clusters (Achtenhagen & Picard, 2014; Davis et al., 2009). As emphasised earlier, the media industry is fundamentally collaborative in nature (Achtenhagen & Picard, 2014; Davis et al., 2009). Therefore, this chapter looks at media clusters through the concept of collaboration.

Collaboration is expected to provide value creation and innovation in the context of media clusters (Karlsson & Picard, 2011; Virta & Lowe, 2017). However, collaboration in clusters features complex inter-organisational dynamics and is inherently characterised by various tensions, because clusters must combine cultural, economic and political objectives (Karlsson & Picard, 2011). Despite the assumed usefulness of collaboration, dynamic tensions lead to complexities that challenge the potential usefulness of collaborative arrangements (Bryson et al., 2015). Tensions between competing dual demands or forces – like art and commerce or current profits and future investment – are an intrinsic feature of content innovation in the creative industries (Jones et al., 2016). Also, more generally, creative work in media organisations is inherently featured by tensions (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009). Thus, this chapter argues that tensions can be perceived as an innate characteristic of media clusters that build on collaboration between creative media organisations for achieving content innovation and collaborative value.

In this study, tensions are perceived as dynamic interrelationships between the elements or ‘poles’ of the corresponding dualities (e.g. Papachroni et al., 2015). Dualities are conceptualised as two seemingly opposing, but interdependent and intertwined elements or demands along a continuum of dynamics (Achtenhagen & Melin, 2003; Farjoun, 2010). In other words, dualities are ‘opposing forces that need to be balanced – properties that seem contradictory or paradoxical, but which are in fact complementary’ (Evans & Doz, 1999, p. 83). Dualities reflect ‘jointly desirable but competing objectives’ (Zimmermann et al., 2015, p. 1119), evident for example in the fundamental duality between creative and commercial aspects of media organisations and production (Caves, 2000; Jones et al., 2016). The existence of dualities manifests in tensions that emerge through everyday practice in organisations (Papachroni et al., 2015), making tensions ‘the source and substance’ of dualities (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 132). Thus, tensions constitute the empirical research focus in concrete terms.

This study follows the understanding of Achtenhagen and Raviola (2009) that tensions may severely inhibit creative performance and innovation, if not properly understood and managed. Because tensions are inherent not only to creative work but also to collaboration, this aspect can be considered relevant for analysing media clusters. Value-creating outcomes depend on how well the poles of dualities are recognised and the tensions between them handled. The viewpoint of dualities and tensions opens new avenues for understanding media cluster development. Media clusters are expected to offer potential for growth and innovation, as mentioned earlier. However, tensions create discomfort and frustration, and increase complexity in organisations (Lewis, 2000). Thus, identifying tensions and understanding the respective dualities holds promise for finding ways to deal with them as enablers instead of inhibitors of innovation.

## **Empirical data and longitudinal qualitative analysis**

The case study on Mediapolis in this chapter is qualitative. The aim is to explore an empirical, contemporary case within its real-world context (Yin, 2015). The empirical data collection benefits from a longitudinal approach, (e.g. Farjoun, 2010; Papachroni et al., 2015) and covers a period of several years (2011–2019) from Mediapolis initial ideation phase to date. The extensive access to the case builds on the author’s professional network developed by personal history as an Yle employee and manager (1995–2006).



The empirical data consists of 23 semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted in four rounds linked to prominent stages in Mediapolis development between March 2013 and February 2017. The interviewee sample is purposive (Patton, 2015), and covers 15 individuals from 12 organisations (1-3 interviews per respondent), adding up to 24 hours of recordings in total. The interviewees included Mediapolis unofficial board members, Mediapolis co-operative board members, Tampere City representatives, contracted external consultants and entrepreneurs at campus. Supportive empirical case data included participant observation at Mediapolis since 2013 (e.g. meetings, events, seminars, presentations), documentation (e.g. strategy documents, EU project reports), and 11 discussion meetings (1-3 hours each) with the Chair of the Mediapolis co-operative board between November 2014 and February 2019.

The analysis approach is abductive, which means moving between theory and data in several iterative rounds (e.g. Danermark et al., 2002). Extant theory was utilised to strengthen the case analysis alongside conducting data-driven and observation-based analysis (cf. Järvensivu & Törnroos, 2010). The qualitative analysis process consisted of data condensation (coding and generating categories), data display (organising categories in patterns) and conclusions (interpretation for results) (Miles et al., 2014).

Following the previous literature discussion and utilising the methodology described, this chapter presents three core dualities and respective tensions in relation to collaboration development at Mediapolis. The level of analysis is organisational.

### **Tensions hindering collaboration in media clusters**

The case analysis revealed dualities and respective tensions, which hindered collaboration development for innovation at Mediapolis (see Figure 12.). The Mediapolis partners were surprised and frustrated over the slow pace of the cross-sector collaboration development. Central reasons for complications were characteristic tensions that emerged between constituent elements of three dualities, especially. For clarity, they are presented separately below, although they are intertwined in practice and contain overlapping features.

[INSERT near here **Figure 12.1.** Dualities challenging collaboration in media clusters]

### **Duality between private and public organisational orientations**

This duality concerns public and private organisational logics and forms, which Mediapolis needs to combine. Public organisations typically emphasise long-term development and viability, which collides with more immediate profit imperatives of private businesses. The risk-taking ability and willingness are also different between the organisational orientations. A central tension emerged between the path-dependency, as well as rigid and slow decision-making processes of public service organisations and the more ad-hoc and short-term approaches of private sector partners in Mediapolis. Sometimes the rigid orientations derived also from the private business side, which was illustrated in building the necessary new production facility in 2015. Technopolis as the real estate operator was expected to take the lead over the project, but its strategic focus was on constructing standard offices. Thus, Yle had to take the responsibility over the new facility against its plans of reducing real estate ownership.

### **Duality between ideal planning and practical actions**

Mediapolis development began with shared enthusiasm and vision between partners. The strategic-level aims of collaboration were agreed on, which was crucial for securing commitment and public funding for the early days. However, operationalizing the ideal-level plans lacked concrete processes and practices. Although significant effort supported by public money and external consultants was made to plan Mediapolis' operational principles and management, the investment did not lead to useful results in practice. Partners on the campus were confused and frustrated with the overemphasis on planning over practical collaboration and action. Especially private companies were disappointed by the discrepancies between visionary planning and corresponding action, because they were expecting concrete results sooner. An illustrative example is leasing Yle studios by external partners, which ideally corresponded with the Yle 'openness' strategy. In reality, studio booking was complicated by long planning periods and requirements of using Yle operational personnel and by ambiguous price quotes for the studio usage.

### **Duality between individual organisations' self-interest and collective interest for collaboration**

The establishment of the Mediapolis co-operative company was expected to provide a collective instrument for managing collaboration on campus. However, the formalisation of collaborative relationships did not erase the duality and respective tensions between self-interests and collective interests in Mediapolis. The co-operative lacked its own decision-making power in relation to the individual organisations and was thus dependent on their interests and processes. Despite the overall commitment to cross-sector collaboration, the individual organisations' manifestations differed in this regard. For example, even the largest organisations questioned the amount of time and effort their representatives used on Mediapolis issues, although the expected benefits of collaborative advantage were high. Despite the shared strategic-level agreements, the corporate aims, strategies and principles often overruled the collaborative interests in practice. This was especially evident in the private sector organisations, both large and small. Additionally, the small organisations could not afford to invest their scarce resources on collaboration without immediate prospects for individual benefit.

### **Collaboration tangled in practice**

In earlier studies, co-location and agglomeration of media companies and attached institutions is considered as key in media cluster development (Karlsson & Picard, 2011, Picard, 2008). However, as the Mediapolis case study in this chapter illustrates, achieving expected benefits of cluster participation and collaboration requires a more diverse perspective. The spatial density of companies in a cluster does not substitute for networked interactions and actual collaboration between them (cf. Virta & Lowe, 2017; see also Achtenhagen & Picard, 2011). For media clusters to provide opportunities for value creation in practice, 'the exchange is what is really important' (Allee, 2000, p. 38). Presence needs to become collaborative participation. Creating conditions for collaboration requires a mandate, ability, possibilities and willingness to work together in practice. At Mediapolis, the internal processes were lacking fluidity, flexibility, rapid expeditions and experimentation, as well as boundary crossing and trade-offs between partners.

Extant media cluster research also typically focuses on the positive aspects of clustering and respective success stories. However, opportunities, benefits or best practices identified in individual clusters and cases are difficult to transfer to or duplicate in other media clusters, because each cluster is individual and different (e.g. Komorowski, 2016; Virta & Lowe,

2017). Thus, focusing on complications in media cluster developments opens new avenues for understanding the media cluster phenomenon and the characteristics of media clusters more thoroughly. This chapter has done so through the case of Mediapolis in Finland. Copying benefits is often redundant but understanding and analysing potential difficulties in advance and being alert to recognizing specific challenges of each cluster and its operations offers a new angle to scrutinise media cluster development. Further, the potential benefits produced by a cluster are typically outcomes of the development process, but do not directly indicate much in relation to the practical aspects of the dynamic process itself.

Even if, and maybe because, the real estate development goals of Mediapolis were met well beyond expectations and ahead of schedule, the development of collaboration got tangled in practice. The success of the project as a real estate cluster could not prevent Mediapolis to underperform in terms of media innovation. Despite the shared initial commitment to create a 'hub' for innovative production in Mediapolis, the diversion between the main partners' strategic aims remained. Initially, Yle's focus was on relinquishing real estate ownership and operationalizing its 'openness' strategy, and Technopolis was interested in opportunities to enlarge its real estate portfolio and business in Tampere. Although both organisations were committed to Mediapolis collaboration on the strategic level, their independent operational realities overruled the shared vision (cf. Hitters & Richards, 2002).

Both internal and external factors affect the development of a new cluster, which is evident in Mediapolis. In addition to the internal development challenges, external issues have also hindered progress. For example, the Tohloppi area keeps waiting for the planned new apartment buildings on the shore of the lake, which were supposed to become a key attraction of the developing area. Also, public funding has expired, and Mediapolis partners need to find resources for development among themselves.

The Performance development of Mediapolis operations has been erratic and uneven. Mediapolis partners have often been enthusiastically engaged in collaborations, but at the same time frustrated with slow movements and scattered decision-making. Mediapolis' development is especially challenged by distinct organisational orientations and business logics, discontinuities between strategic aims and practical results, and contending organisational interests, all of which represent dualities evident in organisational tensions that hamper collaboration.

## Conclusions

Based on the Mediapolis case study, this chapter argues for the importance of anticipating, identifying and managing various organisational tensions in media cluster development. Tensions co-exist and are interrelated, and thus need to be considered as a dynamic package. Achieving this requires a ‘both-and’ rather than an ‘either-or’ approach to dualities and respective tensions in practice (Putnam et al., 2016). Understanding the importance of interrelations between duality elements and considering them as an integrated package is crucial for success in pursuing innovation (Farjoun, 2010), as well as enhancing the potential for collaborative value creation (Koschmann et al., 2012). It is not feasible to dispose of or resolve the tensions, and ignorance does not make them disappear. On the contrary, unattended tensions may result in constraining rather than supporting development and innovation (Sutherland & Smith, 2011). Careful attendance to managing the dynamic interplay between duality elements can support the potential of tensions to serve as means to energise development and as enablers of innovation (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009).

Currently, the functions, feasibility and future of the Mediapolis co-operative are being discussed among the partners. One of the founding members of the co-operative has withdrawn, and also moved away from the Mediapolis premises. The real estate operator Technopolis continues to focus more profoundly on its core strategy of leasing office space, thus distancing itself from the original idea of creating a unique cluster environment reflecting the characteristics of media and creative industries as context. Further, Yle discontinued a major production that occupied the newly built production space in Mediapolis. Mediapolis development is at crossroads. As the case study shows, the trajectory of media cluster development is not simple or straightforward, and different phases unearth different challenges and complications.

On the positive side in relation to Mediapolis’ aims, the coordination of innovative productions and programme pilots has been clarified among the Mediapolis co-operative members and an operator for this activity has been agreed on. Yle is also investing significant internal effort in clarifying and strengthening the strategic role of Mediapolis in its portfolio of operations. The continuing developments and changes make Mediapolis a fruitful context also for future research interest.

In addition to the insights for media cluster development discussed above, this study offers viewpoints for policy making. As stated, the expected potential of creative industries and media clusters to revitalise economies and stimulate innovation is high. The traditional means of sup-

porting spatial agglomeration in clusters by, for example, providing financial support for pre-determined development projects may be useful, but they do not suffice in the current environments of rapid disruptive change. More flexible focus on individual characteristics and development phases of each cluster, thorough understanding on the respective complications and challenges, as well as provision of targeted support mechanisms for collaboration could offer tools for more productive policy making in regard to media and creative clusters.

This chapter suggests that understanding, anticipating, identifying and managing dualities and tensions, as well as various interrelations between them is crucial for cross-sector collaboration in media clusters (see also Chapter 11 for more insights about possible tensions in media clusters). Overall, it can be stated that both policy and management are crucial for handling tensions and thus enabling the development of a functioning and collaborative media cluster (see also Chapter 2 for elaborations of how mediators can manage tensions in creative clusters). It is common to benchmark successes and best practices in media cluster development and research, but past success does not predict future accomplishment. Best practices may not work when put into use in different organisational contexts and cultures. Instead, there is a lot to learn from complexities and cases that are not successful to benefit both theory enhancement and cluster development in practice.

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