Helsinki - Pins and treasure chests
City of Helsinki’s WDC contact person Henri Kähönen wrote down his thougs on the design year on October 24th 2012. Henri is working as a Business Development Advisor at the City of Helsinki’s Office of Economic Development.

Now down to its final stretch, the World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 year has offered plenty of experiences also for me.

Portuguese collectors, for example, have asked for WDC Helsinki 2012 pins and Turkish design students for internships. A Polish textile start up approached me with a request for finance. I have hosted Chinese design delegations, written articles, held presentations and planned some concrete projects.

I have been no stranger to criticism, either. After one particular presentation on the design year, there was an advice from the audience to try out a real job. And then there was this journalist who demanded, after examining some financial figures of the year, whether there is a good amount of design-themed cocktail parties throughout the year.

The effects of the World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 year are visible on at least three levels: in design-driven projects, in events spicing up the city’s everyday, and in international media visibility for Helsinki.

In my opinion, one of the most significant projects in the World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 programme has been the Designer’s Treasure Chest. In it, every preschooler in the metropolitan area and in Lahti gets to participate in 30 hours of play and games with a design perspective.

Instead of carving a stool or blowing a glass vase, the children might think about, for example, the life cycle of a shoe produced in the Far East. They giggle when told that someone has even put time and effort into planning how a project never made it to realisation. In hindsight, many things should have been made differently. The World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 leg- acy will be made in the coming years. Many projects will live on. City departments have learned more on user-driven planning. The experiences from this year will make it easier for everyone to use design methods in the future.

All in all, World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 has created expectations that will have to be met by the city of Helsinki, together with its partners. Fewer pins and more treasure chests. That is what is needed to remain a Design Capi
tal forever.

Helsinki-based designer and city garden carpenter Niko Riepponen summed up the City of Espoo’s design capital year as follows. Nike’s column was published 31st of October 2012.

The World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 year has been marked by projects touching all Espoo-dwellers in one way or another. Variety has been plentiful. The city has been designed into a new place both through the local spirit of doing things together, as well as through the giant T3 project that is reshaping the whole Espoo skyline. It is depicting that even the Mayor of Espoo has turned to preschoolers for advice in governance. All projects big and small have held on to the same ideal: of creating better understanding of citizen needs, and of creating an even better Espoo to live in.

The design year in Espoo was kicked off with excitement to share. There was a clear idea that the World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 projects the city would be handed over to the citizens. To those who wish to participate, and to those that already call Espoo home.

One thing that design year activists have in common is a vision of something better. A shared and clear understanding that the World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 year allows a new type of thinking. There have also been challenges. I remember clearly how the first visions of design left us all in question marks. Without the education to match, with very few tools and with next to no resources we decided to go forward, towards a better Espoo, towards a better future. It has been thrilling to follow this build-up of excitement.

One of the year’s brightest diamonds has been the Gardens for All project, whose energetic and positive visionary Saana Karlsson I have had the pleasure of getting to know during the past year. Saana is one of the people who are building a better Espoo with small-scale yet impressive stripes. Gardens for All has a literal aim to boost citizen wellbeing through urban gardening. Gardening crates were erected in the Jousenkaari neighbourhood in the springtime, giving a chance to pursue a refreshing and ecological hobby. Feedback from citizens speaks of community and wellbeing. The former thicket has now been transformed into a beautiful and enjoyable place. This is exactly how living environments should be shaped.

My own Shape your World project has also addressed the aims of a better Espoo for us all. Users – kids of all age groups – have been eager to play their part in making schoolyards
and kindergarten play areas better. Especially the children, and their desire to actively impact their surroundings, have been in a league of their own. Frankly, a more motivated and motivated design team is hard to even come by. Not even to mention the energy, attitude and joy of life that really go into working in the yard.

Behind a successful project there is always a leader. Such a person who does not have the words “none of my business” in their vocabulary. I am still astonished by the open-mindedness shown for the project by Espoo Public Works. Thanks to these bold answers, the Espoo Design Week and Gardens for All projects will continue next year in new locations.

The grassroots action done together with the citizens is truly something to be proud of. When you can read the feedback directly off of citizen faces, it is easy to rest assured of the positive impact. And that is why I can safely say: Thank you to the World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 team for Espoo for even more smiling faces and happier people. Maybe the memory of a ripe summer tomato or fixing the schoolyard is still on their minds.

**Vantaa - Everyday design, urban planning and design windows**

City of Vantaa’s Project Manager for WDC
Lea Rahkola-Kauranen shared her thoughts on the city’s design year on 6 November 2012. Lea works for the City of Vantaa as a Cultural Manager.

I began my journey on a moving train when I was appointed the Vantaa project manager for World Design Capital Helsinki 2012, alongside my other duties.

The application process for the design year title was already well on its way and I must admit that the first months in the position seemed somewhat chaotic. I kept wondering how the pasting design team is hard to even come by. Not always tangible and

One-off events.

- has little to do with the World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 project. On the contrary. In our experience was our visit to the Karlsruhe Fair in Germany a year ago. We were showcasing Vantaa as a part of City of Design Helsinki 2012. Many people had not yet even heard about the said title, but when we told them that we wish to broaden the definition of design to encompass services, it was a revelation for many.

The passing year has taught that design is certainly more than just objects. A memorable experience was our visit to the Karlsruhe Fair in Germany a year ago. We were showcasing Vantaa as a part of City of Design Helsinki 2012. Many people had not yet even heard about the said title, but when we told them that we wish to broaden the definition of design to encompass services, it was a revelation for many.

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er in what Finns call good design. This line of thought is part of our national romanticism and something that every Finn – and why not also a foreigner – can appreciate and absorb.

So what about Kauniainen? What legacy will the design year leave for us, a garden city of less than 9,000 residents? This is a question that the residents must answer by themselves. Time will tell.

Lahti - Makers of the design capital

Heini Moisio, City of Lahti's Project Manager for WDC, reviewed the city’s design year in column that was published 21 November 2012. Heini is working as the Head of Communications at the City of Lahti.

The first World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 idea day was held simultaneously in all five cities three years ago.

On a sunny day in Lahti over 400 ideas on a functional design capital were collected. At the top of list was an idea of public tap water stations. As the best groundwater in the country is filtered through the Salpausselkä ridges, well-designed water stations could be scattered around the city for passers-by to fill their water bottles or to have a sip of refreshing water. In autumn 2010 a group of industrial design students from Lahti University of Applied Sciences, Institute of Design were asked to design a public water tap.

In February 2011 five plans for water station were presented to citizens in the form of the first exhibition hosted by the Muotohuoltamo Centre. Three designs were then chosen based on feedback from exhibition visitors. The three prototypes were tested out in authentic urban environments: in the harbour, on the market square and in a park for families. The water stations have received plenty of positive feedback from city-dwellers. The coming winter will show which model will best sustain heavy use and the changing seasons.

The public water stations are a prime example of design capital activities in Lahti. The Radanvarsi ideas competition is in progress for the development of the area along the railway tracks in the centre of Lahti. The Radanvarsi call for ideas is one of the biggest architectural competitions of World Design Capital Helsinki 2012. All entries along with images and descriptions can be found on the website www.radanvarsi.fi. Evaluations are openly exhibited online to continue the active discussion on the future of the area. Citizens have the opportunity to partake in choosing the winner and thus have an influence on the urban landscape to come.

The participation of Lahti residents in the Radanvarsi ideas competition is a pilot run as a part of the design year programme. Together with Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra, it aims at testing out interactive ways to activate citizens in planning their living environments. Citizen views and ideas were charted out in the Lahen D panel as well as several workshops held in, for example, day care centres, schools and nursing homes. Lahen D is a product development panel first started in August 2011. It comprises citizens of Lahti and has an aim to map out the user experiences and viewpoints needed to develop different product, service or, for instance, urban planning initiatives.

The City of Lahti has already picked design as a strategic future component several years before the joint design capital initiative. Utilizing design methods has gained results with companies in the Lahti region. Now during the event year, local industrial design and designers have been even more visible. World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 programming in Lahti includes design education and industrial design projects, as well as initiatives to develop the city centre. A common denominator has been the active participation of Lahti residents. A thirsty young biker en route from the Renkomäki district to Lahti Harbour came up with the idea for water stations and has since seen his idea come to life. Stacks of equally good ideas now lie on the tables of designers to shape the future of Lahti.