



Turun yliopisto  
University of Turku

# EXPLORING CREATIVE GEOGRAPHIES

Urban art and the cultural uses of public spaces

Riina-Mari Lundman



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Cover Picture: A detail from a (legal) graffiti, artist unknown (photo: Riina Lundman)

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‘The true issue is not to make beautiful cities or well-managed cities, it is to make a work of life. The rest is a by-product.’

- Raymond Ledrut (1986: 123)
- Quoted by Rosalyn Deutsche (1996: 49)

‘[The ideal city] would be the *ephemeral* city, the perpetual *oeuvre* of the inhabitants, themselves mobile and mobilized for and by this *oeuvre*.’

- Henri Lefebvre (1968/1996: 173)

## ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I study various kinds of creative, artistic, and cultural activities that take place in the public spaces of cities. I focus on the ways in which public spaces constitute opportunities for art and culture, as well as how citizens, artists, and other urban actors can take part in the creation and development of urban environments. My research consists of four case studies that represent different cultural uses of urban public spaces, including temporary urban interventions, do-it-yourself (DIY) urban practices, the more established forms of new genre public art, and art-based urban planning methods. I employ the concept of 'urban art' as an umbrella term to describe these artistic and creative practices in order to emphasise their context and roles in wider urban processes. The specific contribution of my dissertation concerns the rules, regulations, and responsibilities related to the cultural uses of public spaces. In addition, I discuss the role of the more insurgent forms of citizen action and creativity that occur in cities. Hence, the relationship between formal and informal urban practices is another focus of my study. I offer a pluralist view on public space, where 'public' refers to things that can be *both* accessible *and* political but in which the conflictual nature of public space is also acknowledged and permissible.

My research belongs to a study field best known as 'creative geographies', as I am interested in the art-site relationships and creative practices related to geographical thinking. Additionally, critical urban geography has had a strong influence on my work. This research takes a stand on the topic of 'the politics of public space', as I discuss different kinds of possibilities and challenges concerning the creative forms of urban actions and resistance. Moreover, I introduce the concept of 'spatial responsibility' in order to discuss the many legal, moral, and practical aspects regarding the cultural uses of urban public spaces. The research methods that I have used are based on the case study approach and on different qualitative methods. The cases I have studied have all taken place in the city of Turku, Finland.

As a result of this study, I present how different elements of public space (material, social, and those related to meanings, expectations, and values) have an influence on the artistic and cultural conducts in the city, and how art and culture can be used to promote the 'publicness' of urban spaces. For example, I argue that artistic practices are useful in the playful production of public spaces and as participatory tools for urban planning. Moreover, I claim that urban art can be employed to challenge the conventional uses and orders of urban spaces. Nevertheless, I also demonstrate that there are many rules and regulations governing spontaneous actions in cities and there exist internal codes and etiquettes about the creative practices themselves. As a consequence, I argue that many creative urban activities are located somewhere in-between the categories of 'formal' and 'informal'. As regards the spatial responsibilities for the city, I claim that they are not only about obligations or duties, but they also involve the idea of caring for the city and of the radical subversion of urban order. Overall, my study shows that these many ambiguities related to public spaces and their cultural uses, as well as to urban rules, regulations, and responsibilities, indicate that the public space is still, above all, a dynamic place characterised by spatial negotiations, conflict, and diversity.

## TIIVISTELMÄ

Tutkin tässä väitöskirjassa erilaisia julkisen kaupunkitilan luovia, taiteellisia ja kulttuurisia käyttömuotoja ja toimintoja. Tarkastelen, miten julkinen tila tarjoaa mahdollisuuksia erilaisten taide- ja kulttuuritapahtumien toteuttamista varten ja miten kaupunkilaiset, taiteilijat ja muut toimijat voivat osallistua kaupunkiympäristön luomiseen ja kehittämiseen. Tutkimukseni koostuu neljästä tapaustutkimuksesta, jotka edustavat erilaisia julkisen kaupunkitilan kulttuurikäyttöjä kuten väliaikaisia taideinterventioita, tee-se-itse-kaupunkilaisuutta, vakiintuneempia uuden julkisen taiteen muotoja sekä taidelähtöisiä kaupunkisuunnittelumenetelmiä. Käytän yläkäsitettä ‘kaupunkitaide’ kuvaamaan näitä tutkimiani taiteellisia ja luovia toimintoja, sillä näin pystyn paremmin korostamaan niiden kaupunkitilallista kontekstia sekä merkitystä erilaisten urbaanien prosessien kannalta. Väitöskirjani erityispiirteenä on tarkastella erilaisia sääntöjä, määräyksiä ja velvollisuuksia, jotka liittyvät julkisen tilan kulttuurikäyttöihin. Lisäksi tutkin epävirallisempia kaupunkitapahtumia ja kaupunkiluovuuden ilmenemismuotoja. Tämä virallisen ja epävirallisen toiminnan välinen suhde on siten toinen tutkimukseni pääteemoista. Tarjoan monitahoisen näkemyksen julkisesta tilasta, jossa ‘julkinen’ viittaa asioihin, jotka voivat olla *sekä* avoimia *että* poliittisia, mutta jossa huomioidaan ja sallitaan myös julkisen tilan ristiriitainen luonne.

Tutkimukseni kuuluu ‘luovien maantieteiden’ alaan, sillä olen kiinnostunut taiteen ja tilan välisistä suhteista sekä erilaisista luovista käytännöistä, jotka liittyvät maantieteelliseen ajatteluun. Lisäksi tutkimukseni on saanut vaikutteita kriittisestä kaupunkimaantieteestä. Otan työssäni kantaa ‘julkisen tilan politiikkaan’ tarkastelemalla erilaisia mahdollisuuksia ja haasteita, jotka kohdistuvat luovaan kaupunkilaisuuteen ja urbaaniin vastarintaan. Käytän termiä ‘tilallinen vastuu’ kuvaamaan erilaisia lakiin, moraliin ja toimintaan liittyviä käytäntöjä, jotka koskevat julkisen kaupunkitilan kulttuurikäyttöjä. Tutkimusmenetelminä olen käyttänyt tapaustutkimusta sekä erilaisia laadullisia menetelmiä. Kaikki tarkastelemani tapaustutkimukset ovat toteutuneet Turussa, jossa olen kerännyt aineistoni.

Väitöskirjani tuloksissa esitän, miten julkisen tilan erilaiset materiaaliset ja sosiaaliset elementit sekä tilaan liitetyt merkitykset, odotukset ja arvot vaikuttavat julkiseen taiteeseen ja kulttuuritoimintaan kaupungeissa. Lisäksi olen pohtinut, miten taidetta ja kulttuuria voidaan hyödyntää kaupunkitilan julkisuuden lisäämisessä. Osoitan muun muassa, kuinka taidelähtöiset toimintatavat ovat hyödyllisiä julkisten tilojen leikkisän tuottamisen kannalta ja kuinka taidetta on mahdollista käyttää osallistuvan kaupunkisuunnittelun välineenä. Kaupunkitaiteen avulla voidaan myös haastaa kaupunkitilan perinteisiä käyttömuotoja. Toisaalta pohdin, miten julkisen tilan spontaaneja käyttöjä pyritään hallinnoimaan ja kontrolloimaan erilaisten sääntöjen ja säännösten kautta ja miten luovat käytännöt voivat myös itsessään sisältää normeja ja kieltoja. Tämän vuoksi väitän, että monet luovat ilmiöt kaupungeissa ilmenevät eräänlaisina virallisen ja epävirallisen toiminnan välimuotoina. Kaupunkitilaan liittyvän tilallisen vastuullisuuden osalta esitän, että vastuuta ei pidä ymmärtää ainoastaan velvollisuuksien kautta, vaan se sisältää ajatuksen myös kaupungista välittämisestä sekä radikaalista järjestyksen haastamisesta. Yleisellä tasolla tutkimukseni todistaa, miten julkisen tilan kulttuurikäyttöihin, sääntöihin, määräyksiin ja velvollisuuksiin liittyvät haasteet ja ristiriitaisuudet ovat osoitus siitä, että julkinen tila on dynaamisuudessaan yhä keskeinen paikka erilaisille tilallisille neuvotteuilulle, konflikteille ja monimuotoisuudelle.

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This research would have not been possible without all the informants and participants. I would like to thank the Turku<sup>365</sup> working group, Art Slum activists, the PAPU team, as well as Roger! Pictures and Osuuskunta Säättämö for letting me follow your artistic and creative projects and processes. Neither would this research have been possible without external funding. My research has kindly been supported by Turku2011 Foundation; the City of Turku; Finnish Cultural Foundation's Varsinais-

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And then there are all the relatives and friends that I am grateful to and for! The list of names and persons is so long that I will simply skip it, but I hope you all know how much you and your support has meant to me. The greatest gratitude goes to my parents, who have always been there for me no matter what has happened and who have encouraged and helped me every time when needed. Finally, I want to praise my sweet little son, who has taught me more about creativity, play, and anarchy than I can ever read in any book.



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## LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This thesis consists of a summary and the following four papers. The papers are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.

- I Lundman, R. (2012). Kaupunki leikkikenttänä. Kriittisen leikin ja kaupunkitilan vuorovaikutteisuus Turku<sup>365</sup>-hankkeessa. *Alue ja Ympäristö* 41(1): 3–13. (Published in Finnish, translated into English: City as a playground: interrelations between critical play and urban space in the Turku<sup>365</sup> art project.)
- II Lundman, R. (forthcoming). Spatial responsibilities during informal public events: The case of the Art Slum protestival in Turku, Finland. *City: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action*.
- III Lundman, R. (in review). Coping with standards: integrating art and safety into the design of a creative playground. *Children's Geographies*, in review.
- IV Lundman, R. (2016). Bringing planning to the streets: using site-specific video as a method for participatory urban planning. *Planning Theory & Practice* 17(4): 601–617.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Entering the research topic

Each autumn, the new geography students at our department are taken for a short walk around the campus area of the University of Turku. The tour is guided by the researchers of both human and physical geography and those who work in the intersections of these fields. The aim is to demonstrate to the students the wide range of research topics within geography, and how a geographer observes and is inspired by their environment. For many years, I have had the honour to represent the more ‘unconventional’ part of geography, and tell the students about different kinds of artworks, cultural events, and spatial struggles that take place in the city.

I guided the walk for the first time in 2010, only three days after I had started my doctoral studies. The working title of my thesis was already established as ‘the cultural uses of public spaces’, but I was not quite sure how I should approach the theme. During the campus walk, we ended up in a nearby park, where a group of anarchists and counter-culture activists were having a protest camp. In front of the confused students, I spontaneously interviewed some of the protestors, who told us about their views on art, autonomous culture, and urban space. I hastily mentioned to the students that this could be an interesting topic for a geographer to study. On that occasion, my encounter with the activists was a brief one, but it gave me a spark that I returned to later on (see Article II). Above all, the event we saw in the park made me to think about the rich but controversial relationship between public space, culture, and art. I wondered why the activists had chosen a public park as a place for their action, and further, what effects their presence had for the park and its publicness. I was also curious about the rules that were used to govern such an informal event; how it was legitimated in the first place, as well as what kind of restraints and responsibilities the event involved. This ambiguous relationship between urban space, culture, and regulations (both legal and moral) became finally the main theme of my whole thesis.

In this doctoral dissertation, I study various kinds of creative, artistic, and cultural activities that take place in the public spaces of cities. I focus on the ways in which citizens and artists can take part in the creation and development of urban environments both in a formal and informal manner. The examples I have used represent the cultural uses of urban public spaces from different aspects, varying from temporary urban artworks and events (e.g. Haydn & Temel 2006; Kymäläinen 2009; Niskala 2010) to more established forms of new genre public art (Lacy 1995); and from DIY urban interventions (Finn 2014; Iveson 2013) to art-based urban planning

practices (e.g. Metzger 2010; Uimonen 2010). The specific academic and practical contribution of my dissertation concerns the rules, regulations, and responsibilities related to the cultural uses of public spaces, for which I have studied some relevant legislative provisions and other official orders regarding the management and governance of public spaces in Finland (e.g. Assembly Act 1999/530; Public Order Act 2003/612; EN standards 1176 and 1177). As a parallel issue to the regulation of urban space, I also discuss the role of the more insurgent forms of citizen action and creativity that occur in cities (see e.g. Hou 2010; Mould 2015; Pickerill & Chatterton 2006). This multidimensional approach to public spaces, urban art, and cultural events has helped me to develop a more pluralist approach to the topics in question and contribute to the thematic better known as 'the politics of public space' (Low and Smith 2006).

My research consists of four case studies where I examine different kinds of urban art projects in the city of Turku, Finland. The original articles are attached at the end of this thesis (Articles I–IV). What is common to all the cases is that, while taking place in public, they also aimed at improving, changing, or appropriating public spaces in one way or another. My study has importance beyond the local level, as similar kinds of artistic and cultural uses of public spaces are popular in many cities worldwide. There are many books, websites, and blogs that provide more information and practical exemplars about creative urban practices around the world (e.g. Haydn and Temel 2006; Hou 2010; Landry 2008; Moskow and Linn 2010; citylab.com; forecastpublicart.org; pps.org; publicartnow.com; rebargroup.org; rethinkurban.com; streetartutopia.com; thehappycitylab.com; yhteismaa.fi). These actions are often listed under the titles of 'tactical urbanism' (Lydon & Garcia 2015) or 'do-it-yourself urbanism' (Finn 2014; Heim LaFrombois 2017; Iveson 2013), where the aim is to develop cities with temporary, small-scale, and community-oriented projects and interventions. The vast number of such projects highlights the broadness of the phenomenon but also underlines the need for a critical investigation of the topic. Therefore, one aim of my research and case studies is to produce detailed knowledge about different urban art projects and creative interventions, while also demonstrating the challenges and critical questions related to them.

The emphasis of this study is on the cultural uses of public spaces and on urban culture(s), where the term 'culture' is understood as a process or a product of intellectual development through which ideas are formed, shaped, and changed (Miles et al. 2000: 3). The focus here is on artistic expressions and pursuits, with less attention being given to the wider notions of culture as shared values or ways of life. Despite this rather specific perspective, I deeply agree with Peter Jackson and many other cultural

geographers that ‘*the cultural is political*’ (Jackson 1989: 2; see also Mitchell 2000). It is this political nature of urban art and the cultural uses of public spaces that have fascinated me and which I have investigated more in this thesis.

## 1.2 Creative geographies and beyond

This research belongs to the field of study that could be best described as *creative geographies*, which is a rather recent term referring to the various geographical accounts around the idea of ‘creativity’ (see especially works by Harriet Hawkins). The research topics of this approach may range from the analysis of art–site relationships to the studies of creative economies, and from the explorations of everyday creativities to the evaluations of political creativity strategies (Hawkins 2014). Here my emphasis is on the creative relationship between art, culture, and public space. Methodologically, creative geographies involve different kinds of art-based methods and artistic ‘doings’ with which geographers have increasingly become involved (Hawkins 2011, 2012, 2015). Art, culture, and creativity have, of course, been part of geographical thinking and research for a long time (e.g. Humboldt 1845–1862; Cosgrove & Daniels 1988; Jackson 1989; see also Cant & Morris 2006; Marston & de Leeuw 2013; Kaufman 2004), but creative geographies offer a new and vigorous perspective to the issues in question. The relation between art and space also interests scholars outside of geography (e.g. Deutsche 1996; Krauss 1979; Kwon 2003; Lacy 1995), and therefore much of my research relies on the interdisciplinary explanations of art–site dynamics.

My work is also greatly inspired by *critical urban geography*, where the interest is, among other things, to study the spatial inequalities and power questions in contemporary cities, as well as to explore the possibilities for social urban change (Jonas et al. 2015). In general, critical geography does not represent any single theoretical or methodological approach but it is rather a shared ‘ideological stance’ with a ‘desire to study and engender a more just world’ (Aitken and Valentine 2006: 339). For the most part, the perspective in this thesis is less radical than that often taken in critical studies, as I focus on the micro-spaces and micro-practices of artistic ventures in cities. However, the examples I have used are such that they aim to disturb the dominant uses and developments of public spaces, so in that way they have a certain level of ‘criticality’ and subversion included in them. As will be discussed later in this thesis, urban art and culture are both targets and tools of spatial negotiations, and therefore they are not irrelevant with respect to critical research. Moreover, art and cultural activities do not occur in a vacuum, but they are part of wider urban processes and power relations, and hence they are not immune to the world around them.

I employ a critical approach also when discussing the legal and moral questions related to the cultural uses of public spaces. Many urban actions are often justified and judged based on how they meet the juridical rules or ethical norms of the society. My interest lies especially in the idea of *spatial responsibility*, which is a concept that I have used to link the legal, moral, and practical aspects regarding the cultural uses of urban space (Article II; see also Lundman 2013). I argue that the spatial responsibility for our cities is not only about obligations or duties but also involves a strong idea of taking care of the shared urban spaces and using politically motivated actions for better urban justice (Article II; see also Low & Iveson 2016; Till 2012). That is why the question of responsibility – and its relation to the creative geographies of public spaces – is not seen here only as an analytic research object but also serves as a motivation for this work.

### 1.3 Research questions and objectives

The starting point for this research is the reciprocal relationship between public space, art, and culture in contemporary cities. Public artworks, urban festivals, and other cultural interventions take place and occur on the streets, squares, and parks of the cities, and simultaneously leave their impact on the urban environment. The ‘publicness’ of the city space – its openness and sociality as well as its conflicts and injustices – works as a source for creative and artistic endeavours, and vice versa, artists and other cultural actors use their creative skills to comment on the city life or combat the flaws they see in public spaces. Occasionally, the inhabitants of the cities take part in these processes or develop their own ways to appropriate urban spaces for cultural uses.

Based on these multiple sides of urban life and culture, and on the creative practices and processes that take place in cities, I have formulated my two first research questions as follows:

Q1: *What kind of specific conditions do public spaces provide for urban art and culture?*

Q2: *What is the role of urban art and culture in the creation of public spaces?*

These two questions are strongly intertwined and form a general framework for my study. The first question has helped me examine how urban public spaces with their different elements offer opportunities for artistic and cultural actions, and what kinds of challenges follow if such actions take place in public spaces. With the second question, I take a closer look at the creative uses of public spaces and study their role in current urban development. In this context, it is important to study *what kind of*

public spaces are created through artistic and cultural practices, and further, what is initially meant and understood by ‘public space’ in general.

*Public space*, and its closest equivalent term in Finnish, *julkinen tila*, are both debated and ambiguous concepts (see e.g. Carmona 2010a, 2010b, 2015; Latham 2009; Ridell et al. 2009; Staeheli & Mitchell 2007). In a similar way, public spaces in cities are debated and contested places. The issues of power, resistance, and conflict sometimes become visible through spatial and cultural struggles. Thus, the tension between the formal and informal practices related to the cultural uses of public spaces is another central focus of my study. Accordingly, my third and more specific research question is as follows:

Q3: *How do formal and informal urban practices come together in public spaces and what kind of rules, regulations, and responsibilities do they involve?*

The third question is the cross-sectional theme of my thesis. My interest is in the relation between the established and official practices aiming to govern public spaces (law, regulations, urban management) and the more spontaneous and insurgent uses of public spaces (urban play, anarchism, direct action). However, as will be discussed later, these categories of ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ are not stable and there are different kinds of ambiguities related to them, which further indicates the complex nature of public space. Nevertheless, this complexity is not a drawback to my research but rather makes the question of public space a fascinating research subject. One specific topic of my research is that of ‘spatial responsibility’ and its relation to cultural uses of urban spaces. While many informal actions and creative urban interventions are often justified by the idea of (re)claiming the ‘right to the city’, in this thesis I want to extend this discussion about urban rights further and emphasise instead the legal, moral, and practical questions concerning the urban *responsibilities* to and for the city.

In general, the overall objective of my doctoral dissertation is to answer and reflect on the above-mentioned research questions both theoretically and empirically, and to participate in and add new evidence to the current discussions concerning creative geographies, public spaces, and spatial politics in cities. At a more practical level, I hope my dissertation will give new ideas and tools for urban activists, artists, planners, and citizens as to how cities can be developed in more creative and yet inclusive ways.



The structure of this thesis is as follows: After this introduction (Chapter 1), I move on to Chapter 2, where I explain the theoretical and conceptual framework of my research. First, I introduce the key concepts of *creativity*, *public space*, and *urban art*, and specify how the concepts have been employed in the context of this study. Then, I go through some central literature relevant to my research topics, covering such issues as the art–site relationships, creative urban practices, urban control, and spatial politics in the cities. In Chapter 3, I proceed to the empirical part of my work and briefly describe and introduce the research frame for each of my case studies (I–IV). The research methods that I have used are explained in Chapter 4. In general, the methodological grounds and empirical evidence of this thesis are based on the case study approach and on the wide variety of different qualitative research methods. In Chapter 5, I present the main results of my research based on the examples derived from the investigated cases. First, the structure of the chapter follows the original research questions, and I discuss 1) what special features public spaces encompass that are relevant for urban art and culture; 2) what urban art and culture can do for public spaces; and 3) what kind of rules, norms, and responsibilities are related to the public spaces and their cultural uses. Then, I diverge from the original framework of my work and combine the different findings into a more pluralist understanding of both public space and urban culture. By doing this, I discuss the role of artistic and creative practices regarding the spatial politics in cities and claim that public space still is – and should be – a place for negotiations, conflict, and diversity. Finally, in the conclusions (Chapter 6), I once more summarise the most important results of my thesis as well as state that there is a need for a more critical approach within the field of creative geographies.

## 2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Defining the key concepts

#### 2.1.1 Creativity

*Creativity* is a popular study topic in various disciplines and a buzzword in current urban development and planning. In general, creativity refers to the ability to generate ideas, products, or processes that are somehow new, surprising, and valuable (Boden 2010: 1). There are a great number of different perspectives, definitions, and theories concerning the concept of creativity (see Kozbelt et al. 2010), but here the focus is especially on the spatial dimensions of the concept (cf. Hawkins 2014; Marston & de Leeuw 2013). In such a spatial approach, a central question is how creativity constitutes and is constituted by different spaces, places, and milieus (Meusburger et al. 2009). Creativity studies often concentrate on investigating either the creative *products, processes, people, or places* one at a time (the so called four P's of creativity; see Kozbelt et al. 2010: 24–25), but from the spatial perspective these different elements can be combined in an interactive manner (cf. Meusburger 2009). One categorisation is to make a distinction between *Big-C* and *little-c* creativities (Kozbelt et al. 2010: 23–24), where the former refers to institutionalised and profitable creative expressions and the latter to everyday creativity accessible to everyone. Within urban studies, creativity is often linked to a 'Creative City' thinking (with Big-C) that emphasises the economic interests and innovativeness in cities, but also the more mundane and unofficial forms of 'little-c' creativity have gained attention within critical urban research (e.g. Mould 2015; see Chapter 2.3). In this research, the emphasis is mostly on the small-scale understanding of urban creativity (with little-c) and on the artistic and political forms of creative interventions taking place in cities.

At a general level, the question of creativity has been approached in this dissertation from two, if not three perspectives. Firstly, the focus is on creative practices and their outcomes that become materialised in urban public spaces, often including different kinds of artistic, cultural, and design-oriented motives and methods. Secondly, the interest is in the dynamic and creative processes that concern the development of public spaces. The third aspect is a methodological one and related to creative research methods in geography (see Chapter 4.2.4). For the conceptual framework, the first two approaches mentioned are more relevant in terms of the cultural uses of public spaces. The first perspective gives weight to the creative products and practices (urban artworks, cultural events) and treats them as subject

matters worth studying and analysing in their own right. The second perspective is more interested in the processes of creation, with a focus on the spatial causes and effects of artistic and cultural developments and productions in cities. Here my inspiration has been Henri Lefebvre's idea that the '*(social) space is a (social) product*' (Lefebvre 1974/1991: 26). I interpret Lefebvre's statement in a relational manner (e.g. Massey 2005; see also Article I), explicating that space both produces and is dynamically produced by social practices and relations, which in this study means urban arts and culture. As Lefebvre (1974/1991: 37) writes, in such an approach the focus needs to be shifted 'from *things in space* to the actual *production of space*', hence emphasising the dynamic and creative qualities of space and spatial relations.

### 2.1.2 Public space

*Public space* is an ambiguous concept with various meanings. In everyday language, it is often used in connection with openly accessible urban spaces, but its contents are not specifically limited to that. As Alan Latham (2009: 177) writes: 'Public space has become one of the central battlegrounds within contemporary urban scholarship. Acknowledged by most urban theorists to be a key dimension of urban life, there is no simple definition of just what public space is, or indeed should be. At its most basics, public space is simply that space used in common by the public.' In geography, the concept of public space has been used to refer to such things as, for example, physical sites (streets, parks etc.), places for interaction, sites of negotiation and protest, sites of display, places of open access, or publicly owned properties (see Staeheli and Mitchell 2007). Even though the idea of public space is often linked to the material or physical places in cities, the concept and its different variants include a strong socio-political dimension. Famous sociological contributions include, among others, Richard Sennett's (1977) notions of the public realm as a (lost) domain of public life; Jürgen Habermas's (1962/1989) writings on the (bourgeois) public sphere as a site for public conversation and opinion-formation; and Hannah Arendt's (1958/1998) view on the public realm as the arena of political activity. A special kind of projection of public space is the idea of the so-called commons, which may refer, for instance, to commonly shared and accessible resources (Ostrom 1990), common property rights or regimes (Blackmar 2006; Bromley 1992; Fennell 2011), or more recently, political projects resisting capitalist economies (Chatterton 2010; Hardt and Negri 2009; Pusey and Chatterton 2017).

For analytic or empirical purposes, different kinds of categorisations and classifications of public space can be useful. For example, Orum and Neal (2010) have identified three models of how to approach public space, which are 1) public

space as a facilitator for civil order; 2) public space as a site of power and resistance; and 3) public space as a stage for art, theatre, and performance. The first model gives priority to social life and accessibility in public spaces, the second model focuses on the possible spatial and political conflicts between different groups, and the third model treats public space as a place that ‘allows individuals and groups to express themselves in formal and informal ways’ (Orum & Neal 2010: 201). These different approaches are also recognisable in the ways public space has been understood in this thesis, but instead of forcing public space into any of the above-mentioned models, my aim has been to find linkages between them. Thus, in this research, ‘public’ refers to things that can be both accessible and political, and art is seen as a tool that helps to merge these different fields together (or in some cases separate or weaken them, see Deutsche 1996; Chapter 2.2). The ‘where’ of public space has been left outside this definition, as its location may vary. Most case studies in this thesis have taken place in outdoor public areas, but in addition to the physical sites, their venues have extended, for example, to the conceptual spaces of art and to the public spheres of citizen participation.

The definition of public space becomes even more complicated when different attributes and normative assumptions are attached to the concept. Matthew Carmona (2015) criticises the negativity that surrounds contemporary academic discussions and wants to reject what he considers as pessimistic views on public spaces as, for instance, exclusionary (Malone 2002), privatised (Low & Smith 2006), invented (Zukin 1995), or scary (Fyfe 1998) spaces. Carmona (2015) calls for more positive narratives and normatives that would treat public spaces as diverse, evolving, engaging, meaningful, and comfortable urban spaces. These kinds of flourishing ideas of public space are important as they diversify the basis for discussions, but there is also a risk that they lead to the de-politicisation of spatial relations in cities and result in the hiding of urban problems rather than admitting or solving them. Some critical writers, on the contrary, have very apocalyptic views on cities and public spaces (e.g. Davis 1990; 2002), and others, like Simon Springer (2011), want to see the public space as an anarchist ‘battlefield’. In this thesis, these kinds of extra negative or extra positive views are avoided, and public space is approached as a site constituted by various materialities, social encounters, and differing values that sometimes clash and become contested (cf. Watson 2006). This multiple and also controversial nature of public space will be discussed more in Chapters 2.5 and 5.4, where the politics of public space, together with the roles that art and creative practices can have in these spatial negotiations, are scrutinised in more detail.

### 2.1.3 Urban art

There are many concepts that have been used to characterise the art that takes place in cities and urban public spaces. The term most commonly used is ‘public art’, which, similar to the concept of public space, can mean various things. It can refer to art that is made and located ‘outside conventional art spaces’, as Malcolm Miles (1997) writes, varying ‘from the exhibition of sculpture outdoors, to community murals, land art, site-specific art, the design of paving and street furniture and performance as art’ etc. (Miles 1997: 1). In some definitions, the accent is on the word *public* understood as people, with a request for the art to be physically, intellectually as well as emotionally accessible to its audiences (Knight 2008). Further, public art can mean art that is provided or commissioned by public authorities and used, for example, to boost urban regeneration and regional development (see Markusen & Gadwa 2010; critically e.g. Deutche 1996; Hall & Robertson 2001). A variation of the concept is ‘new genre public art’ (Lacy 1995), which emphasises the interactive relationship between an artwork, its site, the artist, and the audience. A popular term is also ‘site-specific art’ (Kwon 2003) that refers to art that is place-sensitive, responsive, and dependant on the site where it is placed, produced, or consumed. To avoid the fixed understanding about site, the word ‘situation-specific’ has also been employed to describe artworks, projects, and events that are characterised by ephemera and contemporaneity (Doherty 2009).

In the original articles, I have used various words for the forms of art that I have studied, such as new genre public art (Article III), site-specific art (Article IV), and urban/critical play (Article I). In this summarising part of my thesis, however, I have chosen to employ the concept of *urban art* as an umbrella term to describe the different artworks, interventions, and cultural practices that my work covers. I consider that the concept of urban art reflects best the context of my case studies and their role in wider urban processes. Urban art also transcends the stereotyped dichotomy between ‘high’ public art and ‘low’ street art (which is, in fact, a division that is not that clear-cut in reality; see e.g. Cresswell 1996) and the confusing public–private division of art criticised for example by Rosalyn Deutsche (1996). Furthermore, urban art does not have the same kind of established status in art theory as many corresponding concepts do, which allows some flexibility in its definition.

In this study, urban art is used to refer to such artistic and cultural practices that are somehow originated from but also constitutive of city life and urban environments (cf. Niskala 2010). Urban art is therefore deeply intertwined with its urban context (Johansson 2004: 26). It is not to be confused with informal street art, but it does not exclude it either. Those who make urban art can be professional artists or ordinary people, which further dissolves the boundary between formal and informal art.

The duration of urban art projects may vary, so that they can involve permanent artworks and long-lasting community projects as well as temporary and ephemeral art installations, performances, and interventions. The ephemerality of urban art, in fact, can make it an effective tool for commenting and influencing urban phenomena due to the unexpected and unusual situations it generates (Kymäläinen 2009). Even though I am using the term ‘urban art’ in the context of my own research, in the following literature review I also employ other concepts such as ‘public art’ or ‘site-specific art’ based on the forms in which they appear in the original sources.

## **2.2 Art–site relationships in cities**

Art, culture, and cities have belonged and evolved together throughout urban history. Decorated buildings, ornaments, murals, and monuments have embellished public places and glorified the achievements of rulers, religions, and societies since the dawn of early cities. Similarly, different kinds of public festivities, carnivals, and other manifestations of ‘collective joy’ have had an important role in the history of human settlements (Ehrenreich 2007). For centuries, urban metropolises and communities have worked as birthplaces and hubs for many artistic and cultural movements and innovations (Hall 1998). Nevertheless, since the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century especially, the range of art that takes place in cities has broadened and its forms, content, and meanings have gained new dimensions. Likewise, the sites where art is produced, distributed, and consumed have been extended (Hawkins 2014). In the 1970’s, Rosalind Krauss was already writing about the expanded field of postmodern sculpture, in which the categories of sculpture, architecture, and landscape were amalgamated, and artists could actively take part in what she calls ‘site construction’ with their artworks (Krauss 1979: 38–41). Later, in the 1990’s, Nicolas Bourriard used the term ‘relational aesthetics’ to refer to those artistic practices where attention is especially paid to human encounters, interactions, and their social contexts (Bourriard 1998/2002; Bishop 2005: 116–119). The site of urban public art, therefore, does not need to be a physical place or space but can also consist of social relationships or events. Public art may also be located in virtual media spaces (e.g. Grau 2003), and the recent advancements in new information and communication technologies have expanded the sites of art even further, as the techniques based on mobile phones and ubiquitous computing enable the making and presenting of art in innovative new ways (Hemment 2006; Scheible 2010).

All these changes in art–site relations are evident also with respect to the art of public spaces. Miwon Kwon (2003) distinguishes between three paradigms of how public art has evolved since the 1960’s (see also Zebracki 2012: 30). She calls the

first paradigm the ‘art-in-public-places’ model, where public art was dominated by modernist abstract sculptures located in parks, plazas, civic centres, and so on. Kwon (2003: 60) writes: ‘What legitimated them as “public” art was quite simply their siting outdoors or in locations deemed to be public primarily because of their “openness” and unrestricted physical access.’ The second paradigm Kwon calls the ‘art-as-public-spaces’ approach, where artists started to take part in urban design projects and became involved in creating, for instance, street furniture, architectural elements, and landscaped environments in cities. This approach was characterised by ‘functionalist ethos that prioritized public art’s use value over its aesthetic value, or measured its aesthetic value in terms of use value’ (Kwon 2003: 69). As Kwon points out, the aim of such an approach was to render public art (and public space, I would add) more accessible, accountable, and relevant to people, but the problem was that it focused merely on physical needs rather than on real social questions. The third paradigm, the so-called ‘art-in-the-public-interest’ model (cf. Raven 1989), which Kwon also parallels with Suzanne Lacy’s (1995) conceptualisations of ‘new genre public art’, was more community-oriented and aimed at socially and ethically sound art practices. However, this approach also had its weaknesses, which Kwon especially relates to the ambiguous meaning of the term ‘community’. She stresses how in many community-based art projects the presumption was a certain kind of ‘unity of identity’ between the artist and the community and between the community and the artwork (Kwon 2003: 94). The goal of such projects was often to ‘empower’ people and to make affirmative rather than critical art. Nevertheless, disagreements still arose as to what or who can be represented as being part of certain communities, which, according to Kwon (2003: 99) ‘illuminates the conflicted nature of the public sphere’.

The examples of the public art projects presented by Kwon are mostly from the United States, but the same kinds of debates about art–site relationships also exist in Finland (see e.g. Hannula 2004; Kantonen 2010; Uimonen 2010). Although there has been a desire to better incorporate art and urban design together and to bring more art into the streets, in the Finnish context the development has been slower and more modest. Laura Uimonen (2010) has studied how art-related wishes and expectations have been acknowledged in urban planning in Finland, and she has noticed that artists have been involved in separate building projects but rarely in urban planning as a whole. According to Uimonen, the prevalent idea in Finland has been to follow or renew the tradition of creating sculptures in urban environments (cf. ‘art-in-public-places’ model by Kwon 2003) and to make public spaces that look impressive and appealing (often for commercial purposes). Apart from this physical design model, Uimonen (2010) also recognises other approaches and practices

of how urban art has been promoted in Finnish cities, including an institutional approach where the public administration enhances cooperation through various means such as art competitions, art programmes, and percent-for-art initiatives; a process-oriented approach where artist participates in professionally coordinated art or planning projects; a market-oriented approach that is based on place promotion, art consulting, and public-private-partnerships; and a model of communicative and interactive planning where residents are able to participate in urban planning through different kinds of community art projects.

In practice, of course, these models of art–site and art–design relationships in cities are not so straightforward but they coexist and overlap with each other. What they seem to have in common, however, is that there is relatively little space for critical or political art within many of the approaches described by Kwon (2003) and Uimonen (2010). On some occasions, urban or public art may even de-politicise and weaken the accessibility and democracy of public spaces. This is especially the case with many of the urban revitalisation projects that make use of art and beautification of public areas, which, as Rosalyn Deutsche (1996) remarks, may lead to the exclusions of marginalised and ‘low-status’ people from these areas. Similar to Kwon’s (2003) critique over the unitary idea of community, Deutsche problematises the unitary, nostalgic, and neutralising images of urban social spaces that various public art programmes have been responsible for promoting. She sees that radical public art ‘must disrupt, rather than secure, the apparent coherence’ of its urban sites (Deutsche 1996: xvi).

### **2.3 Creative cities, tactical urbanism, and DIY urbanism**

The ‘Creative City’ has become an established and celebrated concept among many urban policy-makers and innovators. Much of the literature about creativity and cities emphasises the importance of creative industries and the so-called ‘creative classes’ in the economic development of cities and regions (see e.g. Andersson et al. 2011; Florida 2002, 2005; Landry 2008; Landry & Bianchini 1995). From this economical perspective, creativity has been understood as the raw material for prosperity in post-industrial societies and as a ‘panacea for decline and disinvestment’ (Hubbard 2006: 210). This dominant perspective of urban creativity has become strongly criticised by many critical scholars who have requested a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the relationship between creativity and city life (e.g. Borén & Young 2013; Chatterton 2000; McLean 2014; Mould 2015; Pratt 2011). Oli Mould (2015), for example, sees that the current paradigm of the Creative City (with a capital ‘C’), characterised by such things as neoliberal urban development, inter-city competition,



and urban branding, is leading to increased inequalities and social polarisation in cities. For Mould, 'real' urban creativity (the little-c creativity) consists of urban subversion, active citizenship, and creative collaborations that challenge the ideas of capitalist politics behind the prevailing Creative City thinking.

As a continuum to the debates about C/creative C/cities, a new trend within urban development is to speak of 'tactical urbanism' (Lydon & Garcia 2015), which means the adoption of different kinds of creative, small-scale, and community-oriented actions that aim at improving physical or social environments in cities. These projects are often made in collaboration with urban activists (including artists), citizens, public authorities, and policy-makers, and their ultimate goal is to lead to long-term changes in urban development (*how* this change is done is not always clear). Another trendy concept is 'DIY urbanism', where the focus is on citizen-led grass root activities and micro-spatial practices in urban spaces (see e.g. Douglas 2014; Finn 2014; Iveson 2013). As Kurt Iveson (2013) describes, the forms of DIY urbanism can be various, changing from guerrilla and community gardening to alternative social economies and bartering schemes, and from occupy movements to subcultural practices, street art, urban sports, and much more. For Iveson (2013: 954–955), these different interventions involve a potential for establishing new democratic rights in the city, but he also sees that this potentiality cannot be realised without the wider politicisation of DIY practices.

In both tactical and DIY urbanism, the idea of active and creative citizenship is encouraged. The collaborative and informal grass root actions have been seen to create more democratic urban spaces (Pagano 2013) and alternative urban design and planning practices (Douglas 2014; Groth & Corijn 2005). Often, however, the ideals of urban activism are not fully met. Mould (2014), for instance, attacks the concept of tactical urbanism by arguing that the term has become a brand in itself in neoliberal urban development. Megan Heim LaFrombois (2017), in turn, presents a feminist critique towards DIY urbanism by highlighting the gendered, classed, and racialised 'blind spots' of some DIY actions in cities. Problems may follow when informal practices become part of mainstream culture and under official control and governance (as is the case for example with graffiti, see Cresswell 1996; Chapter 5.3). In some cases, public authorities may quietly approve some unauthorised DIY activities because they are seen to promote the image of a liberal and creative city (see Sankalia 2014). According to Heim LaFrombois (2017), this kind of partial adoption/adaption of some activities over others reinforces the social privileging of certain actions and groups in cities and overlooks those individuals (low-income people, homeless people, undocumented immigrants etc.) who need to rely on do-it-yourself

tactics and everyday creativity in order to survive. Hence, the creative uses of urban spaces are more acceptable for some people than for others, and therefore the question is eventually about spatial politics in cities.

## 2.4 Controlling urban art and culture

Like many other activities in cities, rights and responsibilities regarding the artistic and cultural uses of public spaces are controlled and managed in several ways. Freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, which are both crucial for artistic expressions and public events, are usually constitutional rights guaranteed by national law. In Finland, the Constitution of Finland (1999/731) also includes a paragraph on freedom of art (16 §). Otherwise in Finnish legislation there are no separate laws or acts that would directly cover the production of public art as regards, for instance, outdoor sculptures, official murals, or other similar kinds of visual artworks in cities. Nonetheless, the law strongly affects what can or cannot be done in public spaces and places. If an artwork (a physical object) is to be made in a built-up environment, it is comparable to any structure or installation made in city and requires an action permit from the local building supervision authority (Hintsanen 2012: 78; Land Use and Building Act 1999/132: 126 §). Permission is also needed from the landowner (usually the city or municipality) if the artwork is to be located in a public area (Hintsanen 2012: 78–79). All this indicates a rather technical approach to urban art. One example of such technicality is that there exists a separate Building Information File that gives directions as to how to integrate art into a building project (RT 01-11147). The file provides information, for instance, about purchasing and funding opportunities for public art, specific requirements for builders, and the roles of different stakeholders in such processes. Lastly, the file represents links to 35 different laws, decrees, building codes, or other RT files that are somehow regulating or instructing these processes. One specific kind of situation is when an artwork is regarded as ‘consumer goods’, in which case different kinds of safety standards need to be applied as stated (indirectly) in the separate consumer legislation (Consumer Safety Act 2011/920). For traditional public art such as sculptures this is not the case, but if art has a function and is meant to be used as a product, some extra requirements may be required (as is the case with art-playgrounds, see Article III). With regard to other art forms, such as performance arts or music performances, the Public Order Act (2003/612) may set some further restrictions. The Public Order Act prohibits such performances in public areas that violate the law or cause danger to health, property, or public order (7 §), and therefore it can be invoked if a performance is spontaneous and does not meet the conditions of public events or meetings (see OKM 2015: 13).

Cultural events are controlled by further acts, rules, and regulations. In terms of cultural uses of public spaces, the Assembly Act (1999/530) is an important provision as it sets rules for public events and meetings. Officially, organising an event in a public space is no longer subject to a licence in Finland, so in that sense direct control has decreased at some level. Earlier, the Act on Public Amusements (1968/492), which was repealed in 1999, required that a special permission (the so-called 'huvilupa') needed to be acquired from the police when arranging a public event. Now, it is enough that the police are notified about the event five days before its commencement (or in the case of a demonstration, 6 hours before). However, when the notification is made, the police may set further requirements for the event organisers, for example, as regards the maintenance of order during the event. Concerning the place of the event, permission is needed from the landowner (but not if the assembly is considered as a demonstration; see Assembly Act: 13 § and 9 §). Depending on the nature and size of the event, further notifications may need to be made to different authorities, including notifications about noise, possible safety risks, and the sale of alcohol and food (see OKM 2015). Details of these rules and regulations are imposed in respective laws, acts, and decrees, but in addition different cities may also have their own procedures of how to act. Apart from the higher-level national law, in cities there are also other regulatory mechanisms that Mariana Valverde (2012) calls 'local law'. These mechanisms are various, including such things as municipal ordinances, bylaws, permits, licences, technical standards (which Valverde [2012: 29] refers to as *quasi-laws*), inspection practices, and regulatory fines. In terms of regulating urban spaces and their uses, local law is often more extensive than the national law, as 'municipalities can sometimes wield legal tools that have no equivalent in higher levels in government' (Valverde 2012: 27; see also Rannila 2017).

Under the circumstances described above, the number of different bureaucratic procedures is rather large when organising an event in a public space in Finland. In 2015, the Ministry of Education and Culture made a survey (OKM 2015) where they investigated the opinions of municipalities and event organisers about the current regulations concerning the arrangement of public events. The survey showed that especially the organisers of small and spontaneous cultural events found the permission and notification procedures difficult. The problems were related mostly to how the regulations were applied in practice and not so much to the legislation as such (OKM 2015: 9). Therefore the 'local law' and the conduct of local authorities are central with respect to regulating or allowing cultural uses of public spaces. Sometimes problems may occur if the laws and regulations are interpreted differently by different

authorities or if laws and/or practices overlap and need to be evaluated against each other (see Article II).

Another issue is how the *contents* of art or cultural events are controlled. Social and ethical norms, together with existing values and tastes, define much of what is seen as good, interesting, or appropriate art. As one goal of art is to raise discussion or feelings among people, every now and then some public artworks become subjects of contention and disagreements. Sometimes the disputes related to the freedom of artistic expression lead to lawsuits and trials. A famous and widely analysed international example is Richard Serra's sculpture *Tilted Arc*, which consisted of a vast metal wall that was raised on the Federal Plaza in New York City in 1981 (see e.g. Deutsche 1996: 257–268). The wall was claimed to hinder the normal uses of the plaza and it was also seen as a security risk, so eventually the sculpture was removed after extensive court proceedings in 1989 (Michalos 2007). In Finland, a recent art trial concerned a situation where the police prohibited a scene from an art installation in which an older woman was to perform naked in a public plaza in Helsinki (see Verhoeven 2014: *Ceci n'est pas...*). The police considered that the performance would have been an act of public obscenity (Criminal Code of Finland 1889/39, 17: 21 §) and demanded the performer wear underwear (which she then did). However, the Supreme Administrative Court, which based its decisions on the freedom of speech (Constitution of Finland 1999/731: 12 §), judged that the police did not have the right to censor the performance in advance (KHO 2017: 151). These examples demonstrate how judging and evaluating the contents of art may lead to the assessment of different laws but also of different moral and social values.

## 2.5 Creativity, resistance, responsibility, and the politics of public space

All this – the controversial relationship between art and urban space, different understandings about creative city, and control over the cultural uses of public spaces – demonstrates that 'the cultural' indeed is 'political' (cf. Jackson 1989) and intertwined with the spatial politics of cities. As Don Mitchell (2000) writes:

The point is that the contest over "culture" is a contest over space – over its control, its production, over who is allowed in and who is kept out, and over what the nature of acceptable is to be in that space, over what constitutes a pure space filled only with acceptable behaviors, and what constitutes transgression of that putative purity. (Mitchell 2000: 170).

This contested nature of public space is related to different values, interests, and actions that come together and clash in the social and political landscapes of cities.

The market-based policies based on neoliberalism have especially been seen to produce unequal power relationships and social differences in contemporary societies and to enhance the control and privatisation of public spaces (Low & Smith 2006; Mitchell 2003; Zukin 1995). However, every now and then people gather together and resist these unjust or uneven urban developments, leading to concrete 'struggles over public space' (Mitchell 1995, 2003). The physical public spaces (incl. squares, streets, parks) still work as important sites of (and for) protest, accompanied by the new opportunities offered by traditional and social media (Price & Sanz Sabido 2016). Consequently, as Low and Smith (2006: 16) state about the politics of public space, 'however much public space is now under a clampdown, it is not closed'. Despite their otherwise gloomy views on the current development of public spaces, Low and Smith (*ibid.*) continue: 'New events, new technologies, new ways of responding to neoliberalization of public space, new forms of social organization... are always creating alternative new spaces of and for public political expression.'

As part of this kind of potentiality for political urban activism, artistic and cultural practices have also been employed by many individuals and social movements as a means of criticising dominant powers in cities. For example, Graham St John (2008) uses the term 'protestival' to describe the carnivalised and creative forms of protests that have become popular methods among various activist groups (see Article II; see also Carmo 2012). Additionally, the concepts of activist art (Lippard 1984), protest art (Reed 2005), guerrilla art (Smith 2007; cf. Hou 2010 on guerrilla urbanism), and urban subversion (Mould 2015) have been adopted to illustrate such creative practices that aim to comment, criticise, or transgress the social and political 'evils' of society. For many social movements, visual expressions and representations, together with performed actions, are important means of gaining public visibility (Doerr et al. 2013), and therefore activist art can be used to improve the communication processes of the movements.

When compared with the more radical forms of urban resistance such as riots, sabotage, or violent mobs, the creative and artistic forms of urban activism are often rather subtle in their form and function. Nevertheless, the tactics and methods employed in politically oriented urban art can be various. They may involve, for example: 'inscribing' the city with critical visual messages known as 'post-graffitis' (Dickens 2008); doing 'culture jamming' with the aim of combating the consumer-oriented contents of the mass marketing and media (Carducci 2006; Cresswell 1998); or creating 'counter-monuments' in order to criticise the commemoration of the past with hegemonic public artworks (Stevens et al. 2012; Lundman & Carvalho 2016). Rather than aggressively 'fighting' against urban injustices, these kinds of

creative practices often aim to subvert the conventional urban spaces and orders by attaching new meanings and connotations to them. Ash Amin (2008: 16–18) sees that such symbolic uses and visualisations of public spaces, which urban public art also represents, are helpful in strengthening civic culture and solidarity in cities. For Amin, the ‘collective promise’ of public space, therefore, consists not only of human interactions but also of the visual and material cultures of cities. However, as he also points out, different interventions in public space ‘will amount no more than tinkering on the edges’ (ibid.: 23), if justice and the social well-being of citizens are not improved in the society.

As regards the politics of public space and the acts of resistance in cities, the discussion often involves references to the ‘right to the city’ discourse (see e.g. Harvey 2008; Lefebvre 1968/1996; Mitchell 2003). David Harvey (2008: 23), for example, defines this right as a ‘freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves’. While urban rights and their meaning have been examined quite widely (e.g. Attoh 2011; Iveson 2013; Mitchell 2003), their counterpart, that of urban *responsibilities*, has been left for less attention. Nevertheless, the question of responsibility is crucial when political actions in the cities are to be justified and carried out. Typically, the concept of responsibility refers to how well a person or a community follow and respond to their legal or moral duties, and therefore it is often associated with debates about juridical liabilities and moral obligations (see e.g. Eshleman 2016; Hart 2008; Article II: 73). However, responsibility can also be approached in a more relational manner, so that it is seen as a condition following from our ‘being-in-common-in-the-world’ and from the collective rather than individual experience (Popke 2010; see also Massey 2004; McEwan & Goodman 2010). In such an approach, responsibility involves, or is a parallel concept with, the idea of *caring* (Tronto 1993; Till 2012). Once this notion is brought into the urban context, I see that the concept of responsibility can also be related to the ways in which we care about the city and how we accomplish our responsibility towards it and its people politically (see Article II; see also Till 2012). In this way the concept also has a strong linkage to the questions of critical urban geography and spatial politics in cities, and accordingly, as I later claim, it is important to consider how the idea of responsibility (and its different spatial manifestations) becomes materialised and performed in public spaces during different kinds of creative and subversive urban actions. I will return to the issue of spatial responsibility again in Chapters 5 and 6, when I discuss the results of my research and different case studies in greater detail.

### 3. CASE STUDIES

#### 3.1 Article I: Urban art, play, and Turku<sup>365</sup> project

I now move on to the more empirical part of my thesis. In the first article, I have examined the meaning of play and playfulness in the context of urban art and creative development of public spaces. My case study is about the Turku<sup>365</sup> art project, where an urban space was used both as an inspiration and an object for playful and artistic interventions in the city. I studied how the idea of *critical play* (Flanagan 2009) has been utilised in the Turku<sup>365</sup> project as a means of experiencing and producing the city and its public spaces in alternative ways. The research material consists of a Turku<sup>365</sup> workbook called the *Calendar for Everyday Explorers* (Niskala 2010), which includes instructions as to how anyone can apply urban art methods in practice when exploring a city. Many of the ideas in the book have parallels with radical art forms and unofficial street culture, but in the book the urban interventions are introduced mostly in a positive and joyful manner. Based on the material derived from the Turku<sup>365</sup> project and the existing literature about urban play (e.g. Stevens 2007) I have identified different possibilities but also challenges related to the playful uses and creation of urban public spaces.

#### 3.2 Article II: Informal events and Art Slum protestival

The focus of my second article and case study was on the *spatial responsibilities* related to informal cultural events in urban public spaces. The aim of the study was to explore the tensions between urban regulations, insurgent creative actions, and appropriations of art and space from a critical perspective. I examined an event called Art Slum, which was a week-long protest-festival arranged annually in the public parks of Turku between 2007–2013. Officially, Art Slum was treated as a lawful demonstration, but its contents involved informal elements typical of anarchist DIY urbanism and ‘autonomous activism’ (cf. Pickerill & Chatterton 2006). I ask what kinds of responsibilities people have for the shared spaces in the city during such informal public events that Art Slum represents. I approach this question from juridical, ethical, and practical perspectives, and discuss what sorts of effects the different understandings and practices of spatial responsibility (restrictive, constructive, and subversive) may have on the ‘publicness’ of urban spaces. In the case of Art Slum, the public space appears as a place for spatial negotiations and contests, and, therefore, the analysis of the event is closely linked to the debates about the politics of public space.

### 3.3 Article III: Art, standards, and PAPU playground

In the third article, I looked into *technical standards* concerning children's playgrounds and juxtaposed them with such issues as creative urban design, public art, and transgressive play. I investigated the possibilities of constructing alternative playgrounds under the current legal and technical safety requirements that are imposed on new playground equipment. In Finland, the safety of public playgrounds is steered through the European Standards EN1176 and EN1177, which are not, however, fully defined as regards their legal status, as I have discussed in my paper. My empirical case is about the PAPU art-playground that was opened in Kupittaa Park in Turku in 2015 as a result of a collaborative project among local artists and children. Despite its unorthodox appearance, PAPU was built according to the existing EN standards. I studied the planning process behind PAPU, and explored what the artists who were involved in the project thought about incorporating strict safety standards into their artistic work. Moreover, I discuss the ambiguities related to the legal and techno-scientific aspects behind the standardisation of playgrounds, but I also present that safety standards as such do not need to prevent creative playground design.

### 3.4 Article IV: Site-specific planning videos from Pansio-Perno

In my last article, I have concentrated on creative planning methods and visualisations in the context of participatory urban planning. I have examined, how *site-specific planning videos* can be utilised as participatory tools in urban development. The research material for the article was collected during a research project conducted in the residential area of Pansio-Perno in Turku between 2013–2015. In the project, people were able to leave feedback through a mobile phone questionnaire about how they thought the public and semi-public places could be developed in the area. The results of the participation were visualised through videos that were created in collaboration with professional artists. Both the participation opportunities and videos were brought concretely 'to the streets' of Pansio-Perno in the form of interactive information signs that people could use with their mobile phones. The idea behind the process was to study how the planning communication could be made more accessible to people and, hence, to offer alternatives to formal planning language and traditional participation methods.



## 4. RESEARCH METHODS

### 4.1 Case study research

The empirical cases of this thesis all present different perspectives, contexts, and forms regarding creative geographies, urban art, and the cultural uses of public spaces (see Chapter 3). More specifically, each of the articles (I–IV) produces detailed information and knowledge about a particular urban art project. This kind of *case study approach* is understood in this research in its widest sense, not only as a technique of collecting data but as a specific kind of methodology, referring to the knowledge of what can be researched and by which means (cf. Baxter 2010). By a simple definition, case study is ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context’ (Yin 2009, 18). It gives detailed information about the phenomenon in question and about the ‘contextual influences on and explanations of that phenomenon’ (Baxter 2010: 81). Because case studies only focus on a single case or a few cases at a time, the generalisability of their results has sometimes been questioned. However, as for example Robert K. Yin (2009) points out, even if case studies would not be universally or statistically comprehensive, they can be generalisable to theoretical and analytical propositions. In addition, Bent Flyvbjerg (2006) states that it is possible to make theoretical generalisations on the basis of a single case, and he goes even further by stating that formal generalisations are often overvalued in scientific development. In his view, well-executed case studies and exemplars also have value on their own and they may be used to strengthen the methodological effectiveness of social sciences.

The four case studies in this thesis are relevant in many ways. Even though they all take place in only one town (Turku) and one country (Finland), they provide important information about urban processes and practices concerning creativity and the cultural uses of public spaces in contemporary Western societies. Naturally, not all the results presented here are directly applicable to other situations, because some practices described in the articles are connected to local conditions such as national legislation and municipal procedures. Nevertheless, even though Turku, with its circa 185 000 inhabitants, is not directly comparable to the great metropolises of the world, the relatively small size of the city makes it a feasible ‘urban laboratory’ (cf. Karvonen & van Heur 2013) to test and study different kinds of creative urban practices. A special feature is that in 2011, Turku held the title of the European Capital of Culture (ECOC). The cultural projects and their effects during the ECOC year are rather well examined and reported (see Andersson et al. 2012; Vahlo & Ruoppila 2013),

which makes Turku a good place to investigate the role of arts and culture in urban development. However, the case study approach employed here does not give any top-down picture of Turku as a ‘Cultural’ or ‘Creative City’ as such, as the goal has rather been to gain detailed understanding about the smaller, street-level art projects that take place in the everyday surroundings of the city.

## 4.2 Qualitative research methods

Besides the case study approach, another methodological choice in this thesis has been to employ qualitative methods and methodologies throughout the work. This has to do with the qualitative characteristics of the research topics, questions, and cases themselves, as well as the thought that with qualitative methodologies it is possible ‘to gain a deeper insight into the processes shaping our social worlds’ (Dwyer & Limb 2001: 1). The actual methods that have been utilised during this research are various (Table 1). They consist mainly of textual analysis (Articles I and III), interviews (Articles II and III), and participant observation (Articles II and III) that all belong to the traditional repertoire of qualitative methods in human geography (see Winchester & Rofo 2010: 8). In addition, in Article IV new methodological openings are made in the form of on-site participation (mobile technology) and researcher–artist collaboration (videos). Next, some general aspects about the selected research methods are discussed with references to the case studies. More information about the adopted methods and source materials can be found in Table 1 and in the respective articles.

**Table 1.** Research materials and methods

Article	Main research material	Data gathering methods	Analysis methods
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Calendar for Everyday Explorers</i> (Niskala 2010)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textual data (calendar)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative content analysis</li> <li>• Analytic coding</li> </ul>
II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Art Slum protestival</li> <li>• Assembly Act</li> <li>• Public Order Act</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews (13 key informants)</li> <li>• Participant observation</li> <li>• Textual data (laws)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative content analysis</li> <li>• Analytic coding</li> </ul>
III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PAPU playground</li> <li>• Standards EN 1176, EN1177</li> <li>• Consumer Safety Act</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews (7 key informants)</li> <li>• (Participant) observation</li> <li>• Textual data (standards)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative content analysis</li> <li>• Analytic coding</li> <li>• Reading standards as cultural texts</li> </ul>
IV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Videos from Pansio-Perno</li> <li>• Mobile questionnaire (QR codes)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual data (videos)</li> <li>• Researcher–artist collaboration</li> <li>• On-site participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compositional interpretation</li> <li>• Participatory research (iterative process)</li> </ul>

### 4.2.1 Textual data and analysis

In all four case studies, a wide variety of textual materials was used as source data for the research. Different text formats, such as newspaper articles, policy documents, legal provisions, Internet pages, and social media forums, were examined to obtain additional information about the cases and their contexts and backgrounds. A more systematic approach was utilised when the texts were used as primary or original data for the analysis. In Article I, I analysed the Turku<sup>365</sup> workbook (Niskala 2010) through a *qualitative content analysis* where the text was coded and organised in different categories and themes (cf. Cope 2010; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009). What this meant in practice was that I went through the textual material, looked for common themes and topics, divided the material into smaller units, and organised and re-organised them in order to reflect the contents of the book based on the existing literature and research questions. In Article III, I read closely through the playground standards EN1176 and EN1177, compared them with the urban policies and legislation (City of Turku 2016; Consumer Safety Act 2011/920), and looked for possible inconsistencies among the texts. I was also interested in the style and in the choice of the wordings of how information was represented in the EN standards. Hence, I treated standards as *cultural texts* that are seen to have a specific impact on the society around us (see Doel 2003).

Texts are not limited to written words. As Marcus Doel (2003: 501) stresses, 'text' can refer to 'anything that signifies something for someone or other'. Thus, visual materials can also be read and interpreted with textual analysis methods (Hannam 2002; Rose 2012). In Article IV, the visual 'language' of the planning videos was studied in order to demonstrate how filmic expression can be utilised in participatory planning communication. For this, I used a visual method known as *compositional interpretation*, where the interest is in the appearance of the images and in the ways the images look and feel (see Rose 2012: 51–79). I studied how the videographic images were constructed with the help of different kinds of techniques such as image manipulations, narrative elements, and atmospheric imageries (Article IV: 101–106). I called my perspective a 'spatio-visual' approach as I was combining spatial thinking with visual studies and vice versa (see also Bruno 2002). In all the case studies, my main interest was not simply in the internal meanings of the texts as such but rather in the ways the texts were related to other phenomena. In other words, the texts (both written and visual) were analysed and interpreted by reflecting on their content and meaning in relation to wider questions concerning the uses of public spaces.

### 4.2.2 Interviews

Interviews formed an important source of information both in Article II and in Article III. In both cases, *semi-structured interviews* were conducted with people considered as key informants for the research issues in question, which in the case of Art Slum included the urban activists, city officers, and the police (Article II), and in the case of PAPU the artists, city officers, and a safety consultant (Article III). By definition, key informants 'are those whose social positions in a research setting give them specialist knowledge about other people, processes or happenings that is more extensive, detailed or privileged than ordinary people' (Payne & Payne 2004: 134). As both the cases were rather clearly defined, it was relatively easy to find the right people for the interviews. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and manually coded for further analysis (see Dunn 2010 for interviewing techniques). Similar to the textual analysis described above, the interviews were analysed by using qualitative content analysis and analytic coding (Cope 2010; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009). The focus was placed on how the interviewees talked and what they said about the different issues (e.g. public space, responsibility, public art, safety) and also what they left unsaid.

What is crucial about interviewing as a research method is that while interviews give information about people's opinions and experiences (Dunn 2010: 102), they are always based on artificial situations and therefore they do not convey how things really are or have been (Shurmer-Smith 2002: 96). Therefore, both in Articles II and III the interviews were always used together with other methods (textual and/or participatory ones) and not as the sole sources of data. However, the purpose of this was not to trivialise the meaning of opinions and experiences as legitimate research objects. For example, differing views among interviewees can help to reveal contradicting values and opinions about different issues, which itself may be an interesting research result (cf. Article II). Another challenge was related to the interpretation of the interviews. As Bradshaw and Stratford (2010: 77) write: 'It is no frivolous matter to share, interpret, and represent others' experiences'. Also for this reason I used multiple sources, methods, and theories (the technique known as *triangulation*; see Bradshaw & Stratford 2010) when analysing and interpreting the data and ensuring the rigour of my work.

### 4.2.3 Participatory methods

In the context of this research, participatory methods refer primarily to *participant observation* that is conducted 'in the field' and in the actual settings of the studied phenomena. The aim of participant observation is to 'understand the everyday lives of other people from their perspective' (Bennett 2002: 140; cf. *ethnography*). The

approach requires that the researcher takes an active role in the research process and becomes 'a player' in the investigated scene (Hoggart et al. 2002: 251). I used participatory observation in Article II, as I actively visited the research setting of the Art Slum event and made systematic field observations about what I saw, heard, discussed, and experienced on the site. My role was somewhere between 'participant-as-observer' and 'observer-as-participant' (see Kearns 2010: 246; originally in Gold 1958) as I attended some daily practices on the camp but sometimes had a more passive role and concentrated on making observations as part of the audience. I also conducted observations when studying the PAPU playground, but there my role was more like a 'complete observer' (Kearns 2010: 246) as I mostly followed children's play from a little distance and without interfering in the situations in anyway (Article III). The method based on observation helped me to discover new aspects about the studied cases that I could have not discovered solely from the textual materials or face-to-face interviews.

The on-site participation method tested in Pansio-Perno extended the scope of participatory research to also involve the participation of local residents in the study (see Article IV). On-site questionnaires and visualisations based on mobile technology were used in gathering and sharing information with local people in their everyday environment. Even if new media techniques cannot offer the same kind of in-depth experience as more traditional participatory methods do, they are useful, for instance, in reaching new groups of informants and audiences. What was crucial about the case study in Pansio-Perno was how the results of the study were made visible and accessible to the residents via on-site video presentations (Article IV: 106–108). As Sara Kondon (2010: 273) writes, presenting the findings in public and in an accessible media is an important part of the iterative process of action-based participatory research. In Pansio-Perno, also my own role as a researcher was somewhat different from, for instance, that of participant observation. I spent less time in the field, but instead took part in the research process actively from the inside in an action-oriented way. The results of the study were presented to the urban planners in the City of Turku, and as a consequence, the results and methods are applicable in the actual urban development projects in Pansio-Perno (see more in Lundman and Rannila 2016).

#### **4.2.4 Researcher–artist collaboration**

The methodological framework of creative geographies enables different kinds of imaginative, experimental, and artistic research methods and strategies (see Hawkins 2011, 2012, 2015). This can mean, among other things, that geographers work as artists,

take part in curatorial projects, employ creative writing practices, and use different visual culture methods in their work (Hawkins 2012; see also Dwyer & Davies 2010). A popular way is to work together with artists in collaborative art–geography projects (e.g. Foster & Lorimer 2007; Hawkins 2015). Foster and Lorimer (2007, 431) see that one benefit of such *researcher–artist collaborations* is that they ‘make it possible to learn from each other’s way of intervening in the world, and to offer better informed critique of respective practices’. As a more practical method, art can also be used as means of engaging respondents in participatory research (Dwyer and Davies 2010: 91; Parr 2007; Rannila & Loivaranta 2015). In addition, artists may work together with planners and architects in different urban planning projects (Metzger 2010; Uimonen 2010).

In the case of Pansio-Perno (Article IV), the many benefits of researcher–artist collaboration, participatory methods, and urban planning procedures were brought together. In the project, I was not only doing research *about* art and the artists but I was also working together *with* them. Our research team planned the contents for the citizen participation and the professional film group made the videographic visualisations for the project. In this way, the specific skills and knowledge of both the researchers and artists were utilised effectively in the process. However, the roles in these kinds of collaborations need to be carefully considered, especially if they involve a participatory dimension. As was stated in the article, we (that is, the researchers and artists) had a rather dominant position in handling the data based on local knowledge (Article IV: 101). Such a situation, where the professionals have presumed power over the residents, is not necessarily the hoped for scenario for genuinely participatory research and/or planning. Nevertheless, creative collaborations are helpful in gaining alternative insights when doing both research and art (cf. Foster & Lorimer 2007), and even more importantly, research-based information and artistic approaches can offer critical and creative perspectives for many social questions, including those related to urban development (see Lundman & Rannila 2016). As Harriet Hawkins (2015: 264) notes about creative practices in general: ‘[it] might do well to pause and reflect on the potential of such practices not just for researching differently but also as a source of hope for living differently in the world’.

## 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Public space as a site for art and culture

Q1: *What kind of specific conditions do public spaces provide for urban art and culture?*

By a very simple definition, public art can be seen as art that is located in a public space (Miles 1997), and likewise, urban art is about art that is located in an urban environment (Johansson 2004; cf. Kwon's [2003] notion of 'art-in-public-places'; Chapter 2.2). Similarly, in all the case studies in this thesis, urban public space formed an important arena and site for the artistic and cultural practices. However, in the context of this research, space was not only an abstract or passive container of art, but rather, urban space and its 'publicness' were essential conditions for the investigated artworks and events. The city was seen as 'a stage, a laboratory, and a painter's empty canvas' for urban art and play (Article I: 67) and as 'a site for resistance, celebration, and an alternative imagination' (Article II: 75). Further, the outdoor location and the physical features of urban public space were utilised when encouraging people to participate in urban planning (Article IV), and when making secure but intriguing places in which children could play (Article III). However, the publicness of urban space did not mean that it was open or available for all kinds of artistic and cultural actions. The case studies show that there were many practical restrictions as well as legal and moral challenges that followed as a consequence of an artwork or a cultural event being organised in a public place (see also Chapter 5.3).

Public space involves many features that make it a special site for providing opportunities for arts and culture. These conditions are related to the material and social elements of urban spaces and places, together with the different kinds of meanings associated with them. The *materiality* of public space was utilised, for instance, in the Turku<sup>365</sup> project where one of the aims was to inspire people to play with different street objects and materials (Article I: 66). Thus, the physical structures, surfaces, and textures of urban space can be employed as concrete raw materials and settings for artistic practices and interventions (see also Pinder 2005). However, the material and physical conditions also set constraints as to what kind of creative deeds can be done outdoors in public places. These challenges are related to such things as difficult weather conditions, the durability of the materials, or the safety issues as regards the making of artworks or other presentations in the open air (see Moere & Hill 2012: 35–36; Article IV: 107). The question of safety, especially, has become a

factor that characterises and determines much of the contemporary urban culture and life (e.g. Koskela 2009). The technical safety standards imposed on children's playgrounds, for instance, are among the many examples of how the ideas of safety-improvement and risk-aversion have become a crucial part of the management of public spaces (Article III; see also Koskela 2009: 137–140).

Urban public space also involves a strong *social* dimension that affects the practices of urban art and culture. The people in the city are the audience for public artworks, but people can also take a more active role in different kinds of creative urban actions ranging from participatory art projects to self-organised cultural events. Encountering strangers and performing 'in public' are integral (yet not always unproblematic) features of urban sociability (see Mäenpää 2005; Watson 2006). As was argued in Article I, urban play, for example, is very much about taking the risk and opportunity to encounter others in the city (see also Stevens 2007). Moreover, the openness, visibility, and central location of many public spaces make them important sites for urban activism and protest (Article II). However, as the case of Art Slum demonstrated, insurgent urban actions can also lead to social exclusions. In Art Slum, these exclusions concerned both the people who were considered as troublemakers as well as the people who were not entirely like-minded or familiar with anarchists and DIY practices (Article II: 78–79). Even if many urban activists, artists, and other people intend to act for the benefit of the community on a larger scale, their deeds will not necessarily reach everyone equally. For instance, actions based on tactical or DIY urbanism may be blind to the discriminative conventions in the city (see Heim LaFrombois 2017; Chapter 2.3); those in weaker positions do not always have access or an opportunity to participate in such actions (cf. Article I: endnote 4); or the citizen engagement that is accomplished may not directly lead to stronger forms of democracy and in-depth deliberation (Article IV: 109). Hence, special attention needs to be paid to the social side of public spaces if the aim is to improve urban justice and inclusion through creative practices.

As regards the relationship between arts, culture, and public spaces, the different kinds of *meanings*, *expectations*, and *values* associated with them are also significant. In this context, it is reasonable to think what really is meant by the 'publicness' of urban space. As discussed earlier, public space often refers to open spaces accessible to all, but it can also be understood as a political arena for democracy, public debates, and resistance (see Chapter 2.1.2). In general, all the investigated cases in this thesis represent the viewpoint that there was some 'publicness' (that is, openness and/or democracy) lacking in the urban space and the situation needed to be improved in one way or another. These improvements included such things as: bringing more



joy, beauty, and happiness to the urban environment (Article I); offering alternatives to the commercialised urban culture (Article II); and suggesting new development options for underutilised public places (Article IV). Moreover, what was common to the cases was that the ‘ideal’ public space was seen to be special kind of *shared space*, based on the collective forms of being and doing. The value of sharing urban space with others also affects the practices of making art and culture in cities and opens up new legal and moral questions. These problematics were discussed especially in Article II, where I asked what kind of spatial responsibilities follow when a cultural event is organised in an urban public space. I defined the spatial responsibilities as ‘a set of duties and cares that people have – or are expected to have – for the shared spaces of the city and for the other people with whom they share those spaces’ (Article II: 72). Hence, I saw that responsibilities follow *because* an event takes place in public – but also that those responsibilities take part in the construction of public spaces.

## 5.2 Art and culture in the creation of a public space

Q2: *What is the role of urban art and culture in the creation of public spaces?*

While public space is an important site for urban art and many cultural events, these events also have their own effects on the city. For instance, art can be directly used as the tool or target of urban planning and community building (cf. Kwon’s [2003] notions on ‘art-as-public-places’ and ‘art-in-the-public-interest’; Chapter 2.2). The goals and consequences of these creative urban activities can be various and their benefits have also been questioned, especially if the aim of the public artworks and cultural events have been used to strengthen neoliberal ideas of urban competition, gentrification, and private investment (see Chapters 2.2 and 2.3). However, here the focus has been on the more alternative forms of urban creativity and on projects that have aimed to improve or appropriate the public space through small-scale artistic practices. As argued in the Article I, critical urban art can be used to comment on different kinds of social questions or spatial problems in cities, and to provide new and creative ideas to tackle some (but not all) urban challenges. Nevertheless, as the article further stresses, urban art can also be ‘exclusionary and elitist or boring and irrelevant’ (Article I: 60). Therefore, the effects of the creative uses of public spaces need further discussion. For example, different community art projects or DIY practices are not always as completely open to everyone as they are claimed to be. The urban spaces they produce are perhaps an alternative in their own terms, but not necessarily genuinely ‘public’ or accessible spaces as such (cf. Article II). Furthermore, people do not necessarily understand the deeper meaning of different artworks or events, and

they may even become annoyed by actions considered ‘illegal’ or deviant from normal behaviour (Article I: 68).

Hence, an important question is: What special features can artistic and cultural practices provide to the actual development of urban public spaces? Or in other words: What could be ‘art-for-public-spaces’? Obviously, public art in public places can be used to embellish and decorate the urban environment and bring art out among the people and away from cultural institutions. These, however, are rather passive ideas about both public art and public space. A more dynamic approach is to pay attention to the active *processes* regarding urban art, events, and creativity in cities. Panu Lehtovuori (2010) has discussed how urban events not only take place in urban public spaces but also partake in the production of these spaces (Lehtovuori 2010: 4). He sees that this process of producing urban space may involve adventurous and game-like elements (ibid. 150). In Article I, this kind of *playful production* of public spaces was examined literally, as the focus was on studying interrelationships between urban play and space. The article discusses how playful interventions and actions have the potential to bring diversity to urban spaces, as they can be used to encourage encounters with strangers, disturb everyday urban routines and norms, and lead to unexpected situations. Urban play also offers an opportunity for an emancipatory flight from conventional city life (Stevens 2004), and therefore it makes it a safe and easy environment for political protest (Article I: 68; see also Flanagan 2009; Stenros & Montola 2009: 163). In addition, play itself, when understood as a joyous joint-participation with the city and as an everyday creative practice, involves potential for spatial and playful politics in cities (Pyyry & Tani 2017). Hence, political actions do not necessarily need to exclude the ‘fun’ uses of public spaces and vice versa. As I argue in Article I (p. 69): ‘A city does not always need to be taken seriously; one can also play with it.’

While a playful city represents a sort of ‘experiential’ city (cf. Lehtovuori 2010), there are also more concrete ways in which art and artistic practices can be utilised in urban development. Artists and other creative workers can, for instance, work as facilitators or innovators in different kinds of urban planning and design projects (Articles III and IV). As Jonathan Metzger (2010) points out, artists have a specific license to be ‘strange’, which may bring new approaches to otherwise stiff planning procedures (see Article IV: 101). Artists have valuable technical and expressional skills that can be harnessed when creating imaginative urban environments (Article III), envisioning and representing alternative urban futures (Articles I and IV), or making planning communication more approachable to people (Article IV). These issues were especially covered in Article IV, where a specific account was given of what

kinds of different techniques can be utilised when making intriguing planning videos for participatory purposes (see also Lundman 2016). Videographic representations were seen to involve what I called *visual*, *narrative*, and *emotional* capacities that were all useful in creating alternative planning stories. This was important, because as stated by Leonie Sandercock (2003), to make urban planning more effective requires ‘expanding the language of planning to become more expressive, evocative, engaging, and to include the language of emotions’ (Sandercock 2003: 20; Article IV: 101).

Apart from being employed as tools for urban planning, artistic practices can also be utilised for totally opposite purposes. Urban art and creativity also involve challenging the conventional and pre-designed usages of public spaces (cf. Article I). In this way, urban art and creative actions can help in the making of what Franck and Stevens (2007: 2) call ‘loose’ urban spaces, where the idea is that ‘people themselves must recognise the possibilities [of the space] and make use of those possibilities for their own end, facing the potential risks of doing so.’ These kinds of acts of urban creativity are not dependant on the work or artists or other professionals, but they can be done and organised by the citizens themselves. Thus, at its best, DIY urbanism may improve sociability among people and create new democratic arenas in the cities (cf. Iveson 2013). DIY actions can also give new viewpoints to the questions of urban justice and norms, as they often test the limits of the legal uses of public spaces (cf. Article II). Overall, urban art, events, and other creative urban practices do not need to be only about making public spaces that are nicer or neater, but different kinds of cultural actions and interventions can also be used for political goals and purposes (see Chapter 2.5). In this way, these actions can also bring more versatility and diversity to the urban spaces and their cultural uses.

### 5.3 Regulating public space, art, and culture

Q3: *How do formal and informal urban practices come together in public spaces and what kind of rules, regulations, and responsibilities do they involve?*

Public spaces are regulated in many ways, and these regulations also affect urban art and culture. At the same time, city streets are places for many informal actions and rebellious behaviour. Sometimes the formal and informal practices in the city collide, which may reveal hidden power relationships or normative assumptions related to the uses of public spaces. This happened, for example, with Art Slum, which is a good example of how urban regulations and more insurgent forms of cultural practices clashed during an informal event in a public park (Article II). In the case of Art Slum,

the rights and responsibilities addressed by the law (e.g. Assembly Act 1999/530) were put into question, as the contents, length, form, and place of the event were considered unconventional by the public authorities (Article II: 76; see also Lundman 2013). The case of the PAPU playground took the question of legal regulation even further (Article III). The playground followed official EN safety standards, which give very detailed technical instructions and requirements for new playground equipment and surfacing. In Article III, I discussed how these standards are not mandatory as such, but more like ‘voluntary but compulsory’ rules, which the consumer legislation (Consumer Safety Act 2011/920) indirectly urges to be used and which many planning approvals, contracts, and policies demand to be followed. Both of the examples of Art Slum and PAPU demonstrate that there are many uncertainties related to the interpretation of the law with respect to public spaces. Sometimes the laws, rules, and regulations are intentionally invoked in order to limit the free uses of public spaces or to exclude some unwanted people and keep them out of sight (see e.g. Mitchell 1997, 2003 on anti-homeless laws). However, the question of urban regulation is not always so entirely straightforward, as is argued in the conclusions of both Article II and Article III. Ultimately, the law is a democratic practice, so justified rules can help to build more accessible public spaces (Article II), and safety standards too, can be used as helpful design tools in spatial planning (Article III). The challenge lies more in how the law is enforced and interpreted, for what purposes it is used, and where to draw the limits concerning urban control and regulation.

As regards urban creativity, these ambiguities within the law and its interpretations can easily lead to situations where some urban actions are considered more legitimate than others. This kind of evaluation of urban art and culture is not limited to the provisions defined by statutory law, but the legitimization of creativity is also a *moral* question. Basically, this means that creative actions in cities are often assessed based on whether they are considered good or bad, right or wrong, or as Tim Cresswell (1996) argues, whether the actions take place in the ‘right’ place or ‘out of place.’ Graffiti, for instance, is a simple example of such an urban art form; it is approved when done as part of an art project or exhibition, but when made spontaneously in the ‘wrong’ place it becomes a crime or an illicit practice (Cresswell 1996; Young 2012). Both morally and legally interesting are those cases where things considered as mundane or informal become institutionalised. In Articles I and III, the legitimization of such cultural practices as street-based urban culture and children’s spontaneous play were discussed in more detail. The case of Turku<sup>365</sup> showed that many informal urban practices lost their original sense of insurgence when they became part of an official art project (Article I: 68), whereas the case of PAPU playground demonstrated

that although the act of playing is often associated with the idea of freedom (Huizinga 1938/1955: 7–8), a large-scale standardisation exists regarding the development of children's public playgrounds (Article III). In fact, there is a rather peculiar linkage between the institutionalisation of urban street culture and children's play; in addition to the playground standards (EN1176 and EN1177), there are also separate standards for such street-based activities as skateboard parks (EN14974 + A1) and parkour equipment (EN16899). The standardisation of urban environments is, therefore, a topic that reaches various and even unexpected fields of city life in tacit but pervasive ways.

The rules or norms governing urban art and culture are not only dictated in a top-down manner through external regulations, but artistic and creative practices also have their own *internal codes and etiquettes*. Once more, the case of Art Slum serves here as an intriguing example (Article II). Even though the event had connections with anarchist thinking and ethics, it was not enacted without control or restraint. For instance, a specific set of rules was written down on an information board at the protest site, including instructions that everyone should show respect to each other and avoid drinking too much (Article II: 78). Additionally, in the Turku<sup>365</sup> project, a code of conduct was presented about how to carry out playful exercises in the city in an appropriate manner (Article I: 68; Niskala 2010). Thus, despite the ideas of informality, freedom, and playfulness, creative urban actions can lead to new norms of how to act and behave properly.

As I have discussed earlier, the idea of spatial responsibility is useful when analysing the legal, moral, and practical aspects regarding the arrangement of events in urban spaces (Chapters 2.5 and 5.1). I claim that there are actually many different kinds of spatial responsibilities as regards the cultural uses of public spaces. Hence, in Article II (pp: 79–81), I have made a distinction between restrictive, constructive, and subversive forms of spatial responsibilities based on the ways they have an effect on the publicness of urban space. In this division, *restrictive responsibility* denotes those practices that aim to increase the control over public space. In general, these consist of different kinds of rules and norms (both external and internal ones) that are used to govern public spaces and events, as the examples above, derived from Art Slum and the Turku<sup>365</sup> projects, demonstrate (Articles I and II). *Constructive responsibility*, in turn, is linked to the idea of caring for the shared urban space and improving it through different kinds of progressive actions (Article II: 80). The rules of both Art Slum and Turku<sup>365</sup> involved the idea of respecting other people and the environment, and consequently, both projects aimed at caring for and about the shared urban space in a constructive and positive manner. Nevertheless, both Art Slum and Turku<sup>365</sup>

also challenged the dominant uses and understanding of urban public space, and for that reason they had a certain amount of subversion and anarchy inscribed in them. Hence, I use the term *subversive responsibility* to refer to the political and insurgent practices linked to radical thinking and anarchist ethics, in which the goal is to offer alternatives to the dominant order in cities (Article II: 80–81). The subversive powers of Art Slum and Turku<sup>365</sup> were not particularly strong or transformative in a wider sense, but instead they offered an alternative based on the ‘rupture’ of everyday life (Article I) and on a temporary ‘commoning’ of the city space (Article II). Many of the creative practices employed in the Art Slum and Turku<sup>365</sup> projects could be considered unauthorised actions, although they were not necessarily illegal or against the law as such. Consequently, these actions belong to a domain that is located somewhere between the ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ and represents the ‘grey areas’ of both law and social norms.

#### 5.4 Pluralist view on public space and its cultural uses

‘In the end, I contend that conflict, far from the ruin of democratic public space, is the condition of its existence.’

– Rosalyn Deutsche (1996: xiii)

Although above I have discussed how the publicness of urban space influences urban art and culture (Chapter 5.1) and how art and culture can be used in the creation and development of public spaces (Chapter 5.2), these processes should not be understood simply as deterministic or causal relationships where space one-sidedly affects art or vice versa. Rather, the interrelation between public space, art, and culture is very complex, and the same applies to formal and informal urban practices. This complexity was, and is, both a starting point and an end result of my research. This could already be seen in the choice and contents of the investigated art projects. All my case studies were such that they did not fall into any clear or pre-given category, but combined together various cultural practices such as: urban art and critical play (Article I); protest, festival, and DIY-culture (Article II); art, creativity, and safety (Article III); as well as visibility, participation, and urban planning (Article IV). Hence, each of the cases contributed different aspects to the issues regarding creative geographies, urban art, and the politics of public space.

In addition, the understanding of space that I have adopted in my research is multisided and plural. Here my starting point has been Doreen Massey’s notions on *relational space*. In her book *For Space*, Massey (2003: 9) proposes an alternative approach to space, where she defines space as a product of interrelations and

interactions as well as a sphere of multiplicity and contemporaneous plurality. With this in mind, in this thesis I have treated public space and its cultural uses from a *pluralist* viewpoint. Nevertheless, I also see that some specific orderings are needed to better understand spatial operations and practices in cities. In Chapter 2.1.2, I introduced a categorisation made by Orum and Neal (2010), in which public space could be approached either as 1) an accessible place for civil life and order; 2) a political site for power and resistance; and 3) a place for artistic and creative endeavour. My point is not to fully reject such a categorisation but rather to consider it reflectively. As my case studies have demonstrated, sometimes different understandings about public spaces and their (responsible) cultural uses can lead to conflicts and disagreements (see especially Article II). Perhaps more importantly, however, my research has shown that artistic and creative practices can also blur the boundaries between different categories and build public spaces that are *both* accessible *and* political. One way to do this is to facilitate and enhance citizens' participation in the development of their living environments through artistic practices (Articles I and IV). Urban art can also encourage people to play with the boundaries of both the city and the self (Article I; see also Lundman 2012). This boundary breaking can result from intentional resistance and counter-action (Article II), or sometimes it may occur unexpectedly, as when urban structures and even the artworks themselves are used differently from their planned purposes (Article III: 93). Thus, this research gives a versatile and dynamic picture of public spaces and their cultural uses, where different definitions, assumptions, and features are intersected and mixed rather than separated and detached from each other.

This kind of pluralist thinking is also important when making normative evaluations and judgements about public spaces, urban art, and other cultural practices in cities. In Article II, I make a statement that responsible uses of public space require a 'balancing between the elements of justified restrictions, caring relationships, and insurgent forms of resistance' (p. 81). In practice, it is a difficult – if not perhaps even an impossible task – to combine together these different perspectives and ways of doing. In such cases, acknowledging the conflictual and agonistic characteristics of democracy (see Mouffe 2000, 2005, 2014) and of art and urban space (cf. Deutsche 1996; see also Rannila and Loivaranta 2015) is necessary. As Chantal Mouffe (2000: 103) writes: 'the prime task is not to eliminate passions from the sphere of the public... but to mobilize those passions towards democratic designs'. This is where art and culture can show their greatest strength as regards the politics of public space. The challenges and contradictions that follow from cultural debates and struggles in cities, as well as the collisions between formal and informal urban practices, are

indications of the 'real' nature of public space, which I see is about *spatial negotiations*, *conflicts*, and *diversity* (cf. Low and Smith 2006; Watson 2006; Zukin 1995). In such a view, the roles that the arts and creative practices can assume are various; they can be used to pinpoint problems, catalyse critical discussions, disturb the established policies and practices, and subvert the urban order, at least temporarily. Small acts of urban creativity, new forms of collaborations, both formal and informal types of urban activism, and also spatial and cultural struggles in cities demonstrate that there is still much happening and still much to be done in cities and in urban public spaces worldwide. Above all, these creative actions, celebrations, disruptions, and contests prove that public space – even in its political form – is not dead, but there remains some 'politics of hope' (cf. Amin and Thrift 2002: 4; Article I: 69) as regards alternative and creative urban futures.



## 6. CONCLUSIONS

My explorations within creative geographies (and to some extent, critical geographies), which started from a chance encounter with the counter-culture activists in a local park several years ago, have brought me now to the point where I can finally summarise the work I have done. Thus, based on my empirical findings and reflections on the existing literature, the general arguments and results of my thesis are the following:

- **The material and social elements of public spaces, together with the different meanings, values, and expectations related to them, afford many opportunities for urban art and culture.** This is evident, for example: in the ways urban environments can be used as raw materials and settings for artistic practices; the manner in which the social encounters and visibility provided by open public spaces enhance the accessibility of art and culture; and the idea that public space is understood as a shared space that enables collective experiences and actions in cities.
- **Urban art and culture can be utilised in order to promote the ‘publicness’ of urban spaces.** In this kind of art-*for*-public-spaces approach, the emphasis should be placed on the processes of urban creativity. What this means in practice is that, for instance: the special skills of artists are made the most of in urban planning; the playful production of public spaces is encouraged in cities; and that citizens themselves are allowed to take part in the creative development of urban environments. Moreover, urban art can be seen to provide alternatives to the conventional uses of public spaces and used as a means of political action and resistance.
- **However, urban art and culture confront many challenges and restrictions that stem from the practical, legal, and moral limitations concerning public spaces.** These can be related to material conditions as well as to social misconduct and exclusions taking place in cities. External laws and regulations govern what can be done in public spaces, and urban art and culture also involve internal codes and etiquettes. In addition, there are different kinds of technical recommendations such as quasi-legal safety standards that have their effect on the urban environments. Nevertheless, these laws, regulations, and norms are sometimes ambiguous and contradictory, and as a consequence, the status of creative urban practices often fall between the categories of the ‘formal’ and ‘informal’.

- **The interrelations between public space, art, and culture should be understood in a pluralist manner where different definitions, assumptions, and practices (both formal and informal) coexist, meet, and sometimes collide.** This requires the recognition of the conflictual nature of urban space, society, and democratic debates. Urban art and culture can take various forms and positions in these debates, and together with the spatial struggles in cities, they prove that public space is still an important site for negotiations, conflicts, and diversity.

More specifically, in this thesis, I have contributed to the discussions around the politics of public space by introducing the concept of ‘spatial responsibility’ in the context of the cultural uses of public spaces. I have defined spatial responsibilities as ‘a set of duties and cares that people have – or are expected to have – for the shared spaces of the city and for the other people with whom they share those spaces’. I have made a further division between restrictive, constructive, and subversive forms of responsibilities depending on their effects on the ‘publicness’ of urban spaces. All these different forms of spatial responsibilities involve some possibilities and weaknesses in terms of the uses and creation of urban public spaces. Restrictive responsibility, which I relate to the adoption of different rules, regulations, and duties, sets limitations on the free uses of public spaces, but alternatively, it can help to build spaces that appear to be safer and therefore feel more accessible to many. Actions based on constructive responsibility and on the idea of caring for the city often aim at creating spaces that are both open and democratic; however, these actions may also become de-politicised and harnessed under the strategies of neoliberal urban development. Subversive responsibility, in turn, offers a radical and political option for the caretaking of the city, although some subversive urban practices may also involve social exclusions and do not directly produce spaces that would be open to everyone. Again, these ambiguities demonstrate the complexity as regards public spaces and urban creativity. If I want to make any normative claims in my thesis (and I do), I argue the following:

- It is important to study and recognise the spatial responsibilities behind different creative actions in cities.
- These responsibilities not only concern obligations or duties, but they also involve the idea of caring for the city and of the radical subversion of urban spaces and order.
- Different forms of spatial responsibilities are necessary *together* in the creation of public spaces that are both accessible and political.

These claims are the ones that I see as my central contribution to the academic field, but they are also the message I want to share with urban activists, artists, planners, and everyone else who deals with issues regarding urban culture and development. As regards urban management and public authorities, what can be done is to give space (both physically and mentally) to the people so that the city can become ‘the perpetual *oeuvre* of the inhabitants, themselves mobile and mobilized for and by this *oeuvre*’ (Lefebvre 1968/1996: 173). In such a situation, it is both rights and responsibilities that matter.

Finally, I will briefly return to the issue of creative geographies and to my own experiences and expectations in that field. As de Leeuw and Hawkins (2017) have noted, there is certain lack of expressively critical and politicised interrogation and output within the creative (re)turn of geography (see also Marston & de Leeuw 2013). I share their view, and claim that creative geographies, both as a study field and subject, would benefit substantially from the perspectives derived from the critical tradition of geography and other social sciences (and why not, vice versa). This involves both the adoption of normal academic criticality as regards the research topics, methods, and concepts in question, as well as a readiness to admit the challenges and problems related to creative research issues and practices. Recently, many interesting critical investigations have been conducted regarding urban creativity (e.g. Heim LaFrombois 2017; Iveson 2013; Mould 2015; Pyyry & Tani 2017) and the integration of creative and critical geographies can be taken even further. For future research (and this involves the artistic ‘doings’ made by geographers, cf. Hawkins 2011; 2012; 2015), this requires that the focus of creative geographies should shift increasingly towards the questions of urban justice and inclusiveness. Moreover, using creative methods within critical geography can also help to find new vantage points to urban problems and challenges. Therefore, the combination of creative and critical geographies opens up new possibilities for innovative research concerning the just development of cities and urban public spaces.

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