



The Invisibles

Power, Policy and Right to the Public Space

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Abstract

Public space is commonly defined as a place that is open and accessible for all. This thesis aims to investigate and contest the nature of the public space by examining it with the perspective of the homeless people. With this approach the study seeks to identify and analyze the factors that make the public space either exclusive or inclusive. The instruments of exclusion are not always visible or easy to recognize, because they are targeted for those who are unwanted to the public and thus overlooked by the others. The study argues that in order to develop democratic, equal and socially sustainable cities, we must comprehend how the urban environment is experienced by those, who are usually discriminated against in society. Hereby the thesis contemplates if different people have equal rights to the public space. Most importantly, the thesis emphasizes that planners need a comprehensive account of the problem to guide us in our choice of intervention strategies that will be appropriate at various stages in the cycle of homelessness.

The thesis seeks to provide answers to the following questions: What makes public spaces less approachable for some social groups? Can urban planning instruments contribute in preventing segregation, or even homelessness? Who has the right to the city? How does exclusive and unequal public space reflect the society, and how to involve people in urban planning, who are left outside of the society? The study strives to answer these questions by utilizing literature review and qualitative research methods. The qualitative, mixed methods included: direct observation, art-based research and community-based participatory research.

The focus area of the study is the area of central Helsinki, including areas with visible homelessness.

Key Words: homelessness, public space, urban planning, segregation, right to the city, democratic city, defensive architecture, hostile architecture, inclusionary zoning, participatory urban planning, urban activism, exclusive space, temporary space.

Tiivistelmä

Julkisesta tilasta käytetään usein määrittelyä ”kaikille avoin, helposti saavutettava tila.” Tämän diplomityön tavoitteena on tutkia ja kyseenalaistaa julkista tilaa sekä sen luonnetta lähestymällä aihetta kodittomien ihmisten näkökulmasta. Tällä tavoin pyrimme tunnistamaan ja analysoimaan niitä tekijöitä, jotka tekevät julkisesta tilasta poissulkevan, tai päinvastoin, vastaanottavaisen. Poissulkevat elementit jäävät usein havaitsematta, sillä yleensä vain he, joiden oleskelua näillä tekijöillä pyritään rajaamaan, kiinnittävät niihin huomiota. Jotta pystyisimme kehittämään demokraattisia, tasa-arvoisia ja sosiaalisesti kestäviä kaupunkeja, meidän on hyvä ymmärtää miten kodittomat ihmiset, joihin usein kohdistuu yhteiskunnallista syrjintää, kokevat ja käyttävät julkista tilaa. Tämän myötä Diplomityö pohtii sitä, onko kaikilla ihmisryhmillä tasa-arvoiset oikeudet julkisen tilan käyttöoikeuksiin. Tärkeimpänä vätteenä tutkimuksessa tuodaan esille kaupunkisuunnittelijoiden tiedontarpeen kodittomuuden ongelmasta ja sen syklin eri vaiheista, jotta suunnittelun interventiostrategiat olisivat johdonmukaisia ja taroituksenmukaisia.

Tämä työ etsii vastauksia seuraaviin kysymyksiin: Mikä tekee kaupunkitilasta vaikeammin lähestyttävän joillekin ihmisryhmille? Kenellä on oikeus kaupunkiin? Voiko kaupunkisuunnittelun keinoin vaikuttaa eriarvoistumisen ja jopa kodittomuuden ehkäisyyn? Miten osallistaa ihmisiä jotka kokevat jääneensä yhteiskunnan ulkopuolelle? Näihin kysymyksiin pyritään vastaamaan kirjallisuustutkimuksen ja kvalitatiivisten metodien avulla. Tutkimuksessa käytetyt kvalitatiiviset ja monimetelmälliset tutkimusmenetelmät ovat osallistuva havainnointi, taiteellinen tutkimus sekä osallistava yhteisötutkimus. Tutkimuksen kohdealueena on Helsingin kantakaupunki ja erityisesti alueet, joissa kodittomuus on näkyvillä.

Avainsanat: kodittomuus, julkinen tila, kaupunkisuunnittelu, segregatio, oikeus kaupunkiin, demokraattinen kaupunki, vihamielinen arkkitehtuuri, inklusiivinen kaupunkisuunnittelu, osallistava kaupunkisuunnittelu, kaupunkiaktivismi, eksklusiivinen tila, väliaikaistila.

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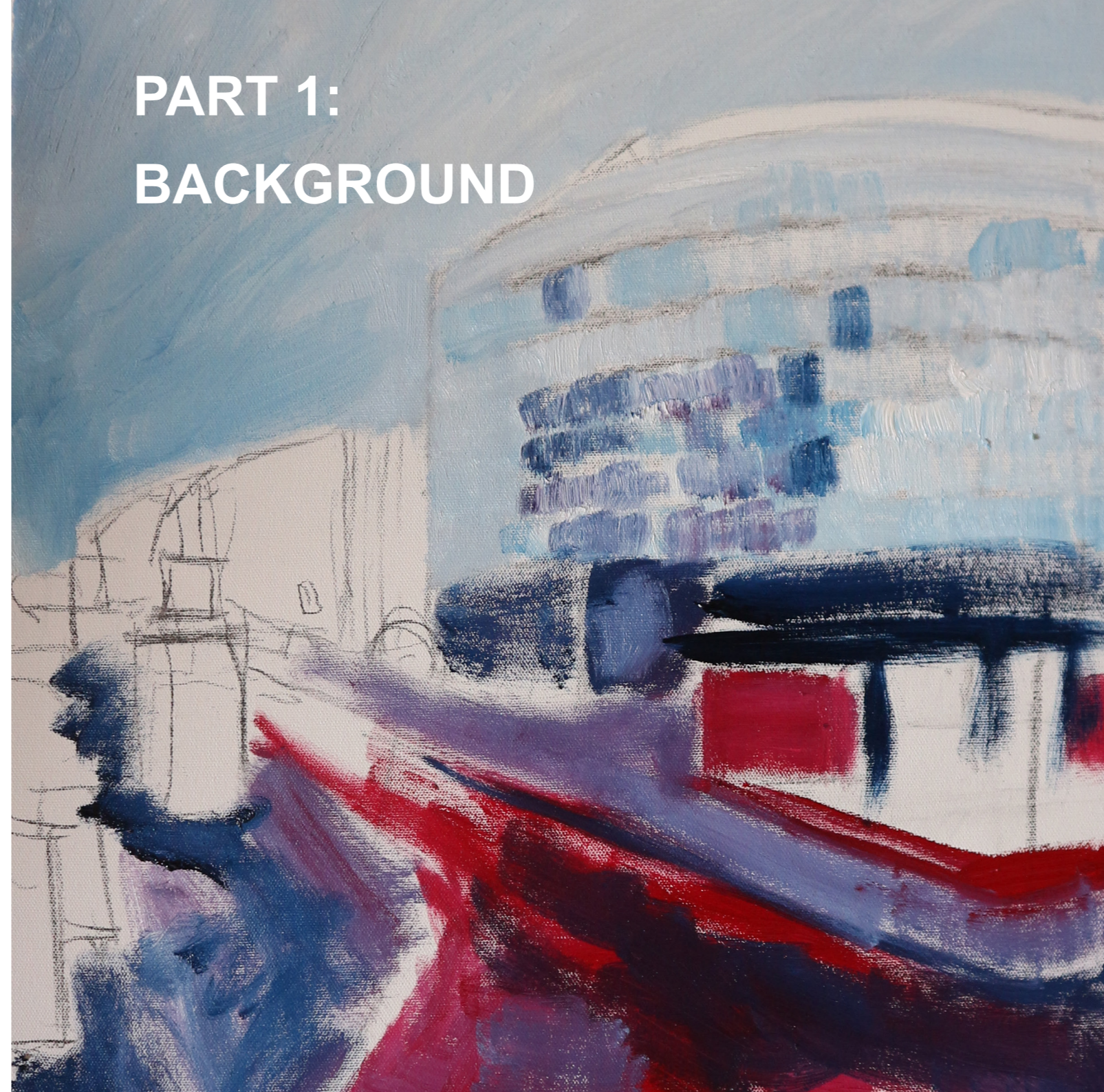
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PART 1: BACKGROUND

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:
UN General Assembly in 1948. Article 25 (1)



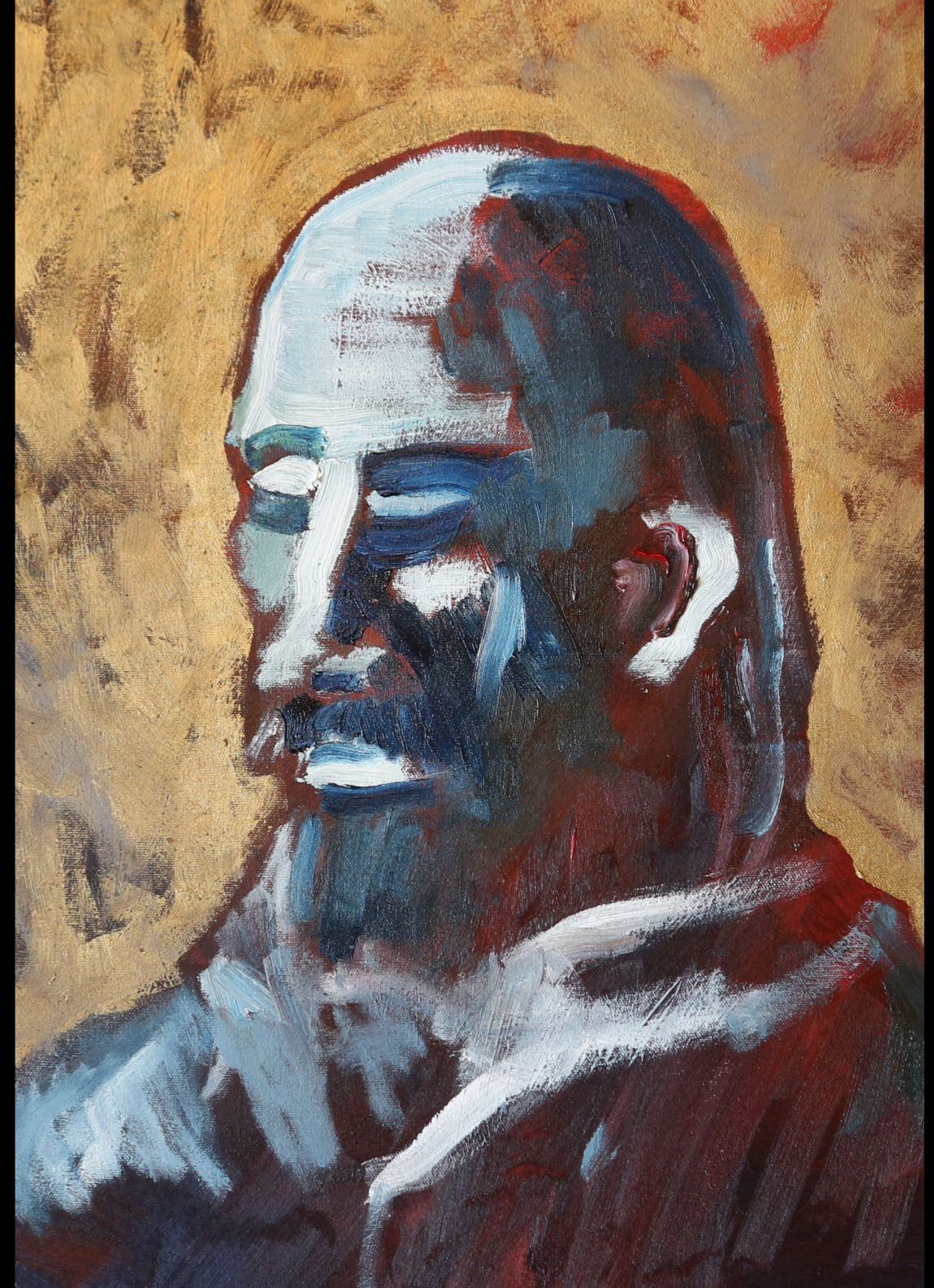
00 INTRODUCTION

Before I started my studies with architecture I was working with the mentally challenged and the elderly people in the healthcare field. The human-centered empathetic and equal approach has remained as one of my principles throughout the studies and further on during my career. My dream and goal as an urban planner has always been to be able to develop sustainable and democratic environments. This has led me to get involved with urban activism, which has provided a way for me to fight against the privatization of the public spaces and the neoliberal regime. The present political and economic context has turned public spaces into a tool for the branding and marketing of cities, thus the inadequacy of truly public, equal and non-commercial public spaces has been concerning. Therefore, I wanted to investigate and to act on it.

In January 2019 Yle News reported that a 23-year old girl had been homeless for two years in Helsinki (Yle News, 23.1.2019). I recognized this young woman and I was shocked. I decided to sign up for volunteer work for an NGO working with homeless people in Helsinki. The idea for this topic started developing when I spent time with the homeless and started paying attention to how they behave and are treated in public space. Since the nature of public space had already been intriguing my mind, I decided to investigate it, with the perspective of the homeless people.

The thesis examines the power relations in the public space with the homeless perspective and further on the changing balance between the public and private sectors. It also investigates the ways how planners can contribute in creating inclusive and democratic cities. The methodology of the research included deskwork and fieldwork. The former included literature review, definition of the core concepts and identification of the plausible urban planning instruments. The latter included primary data collection about the homeless population's spatial and social characteristics. The focus of this study is in the analysis of public space which was implemented under the combined direct observation method and art based research as a method of community-based participatory research (CBPR). CBPR is often used for research that argues about community-identified problems or issues (Leavy, 2017) and art-based research is a community process by nature and generally expands qualitative research methods. The study's focal point is the area of central Helsinki, including the districts of Kallio, Vallila and Sörnäinen, which have a history and a reputation of having many homeless people.

The thesis is divided in three parts. Part one, "Background" introduces the



theoretical field related to the study. I found it fundamental to start with the reasons behind homelessness in order to understand the homelessness phenomenon. Then, the essential concepts, such as “home” and “public space” are defined, continuing with introducing urban planning instruments that affect the homeless situation. In the end of the first part, urban activism is investigated as a way to react to the privatization of the public space.

The second part, “The Local Context”, introduces the methodology and then focuses on investigating homelessness in Finland and further on, in Helsinki. The reasons for the declining numbers of Finnish homelessness are sought in the chapter 03 and further, the homeless in Helsinki is closely examined, first through the history of it, and then by studying the areas of visible homelessness.

The third part, “The Results”, consists of the analysis, discussion and conclusions. First the selected public spaces with visible homelessness are analyzed with mixed methods; art-based research and direct observation as main tools. Secondly the user groups are taken to a closer examination and homelessness in public spaces is analyzed. Then, the nature of public space is re-considered and the urban planning tools are taken to an evaluation. In the Discussion chapter the findings and the methodology behind them are critically examined and evaluated. Ultimately, the Conclusion chapter summarises the results and suggests topics for further study.

0.1 Objectives

There are three main objectives; First one is to study and analyze public spaces with the homeless perspective and to further investigate if the public space is truly equal for different user groups. Secondly, the study aims to explore how urban planning can contribute to the prevention and solution of homelessness, through urban planning instruments. The third objective is to bring awareness about the topic amongst architects and urban planners. Homelessness is rarely considered in the urban planning field, even though it is a clear sign of radical segregation and further on, an unhealthy city.

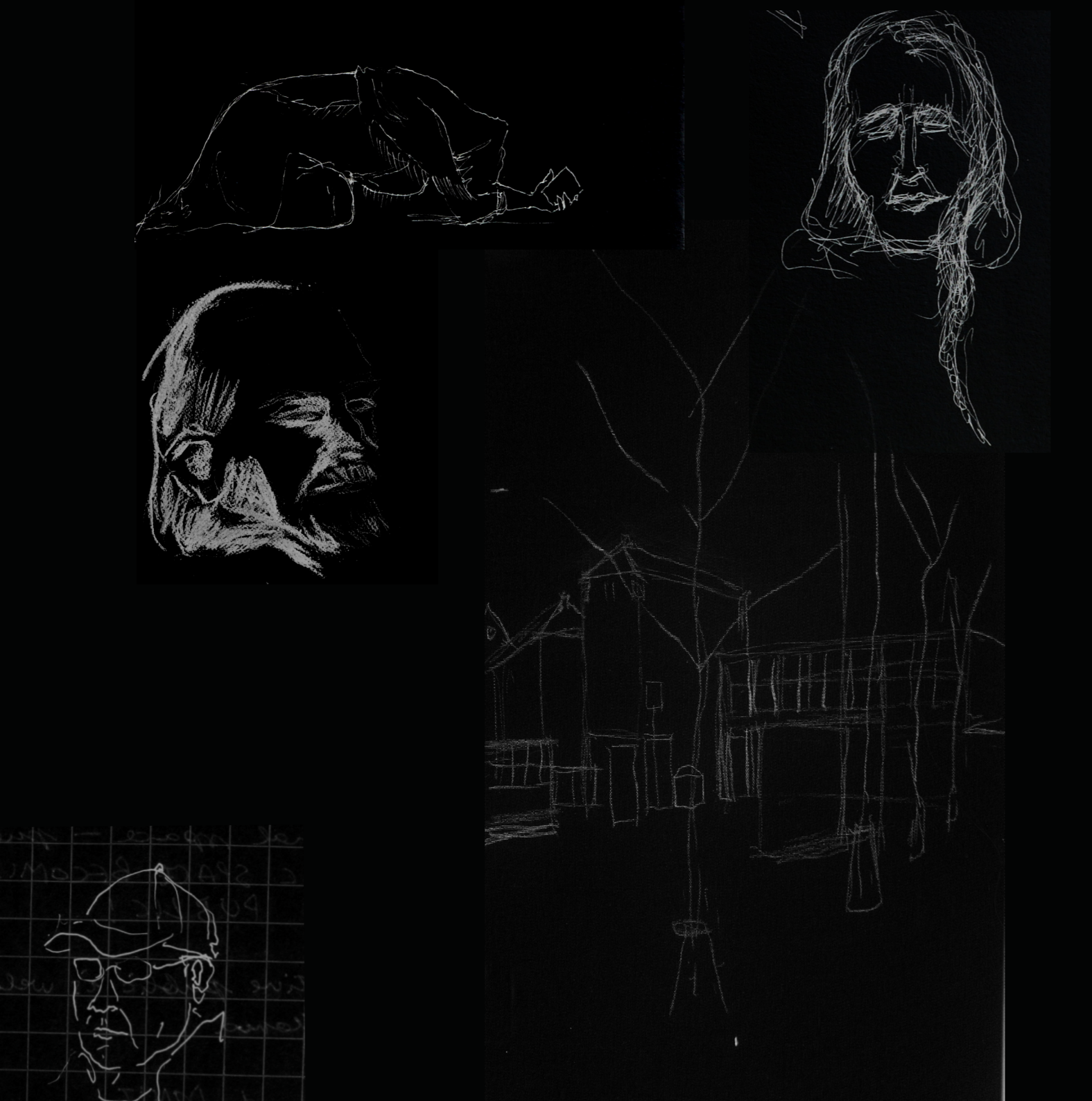
0.2 Relevance

Even though Finland is an exception when it comes to the increasing amount of homeless people, rough sleeping in most countries in Europe – and homelessness more generally – are on the rise (Colini, 2019; FEANTSA, 2019b). The European migrant crisis, also known as the refugee crisis, in 2015, affected for one’s part the growing number of the homeless people and made the streets of many European big cities more crowded with rough sleepers. Besides this, many countries, such as England and France, have enforced unsuccessful housing policies during the last ten years, which has directly affected the amount of the homeless (Clapham, 2019).

The needs of homeless people do not usually appear in the objectives of urban planners and urban planning instruments are rarely used to promote preventive and intervention measures. Therefore it is vital for planners to recognize the gravity of the situation and to search for tools in the urban planning field to fight against homelessness.

By investigating the power relations in the public space with the homeless perspective it is possible to point out the imbalance, which otherwise might not be noticed. The elements that affect how the public space is experienced and used can give us a better understanding of the nature of public space and further on, point out the factors leading to segregation. Social sustainability is one of the main goals of urban planning (Ahmadi & Toghyani, 2011; Jalkanen et al., 2017; Sanoff, 2006) and in order to strive to achieve it and fully comprehend the society as a whole, we must investigate all the parts of it, in this case those who have been left out of it.

Further, nonetheless there are many books and studies that discuss the nature of public space and the “right to the city”, there is very little research that investigates homelessness through urban analysis. In this study I attend to bring homelessness to the foreground in order to observe the city from the homeless perspective and to give homelessness the attention that it needs.



0.3 About Methodology

During the time I was conducting my research the pandemic, caused by Covid-19, closed the public buildings, such as schools, universities, libraries and amongst them, homeless shelters. Thus, the homeless people were forced to remain on the move during the day and stay in the few public buildings that were still operating. The situation, as terrible as it was, created a possibility to investigate how the homeless use the public space. Therefore, I focused on using methods, such as literature review, direct observation, community-based participatory research and art-based research in my study.

0.3.1 Literature review

The first part of the study relies on the literature review. The literature I selected is from the theoretical field and seeks answers to questions such as “Who has the right to the city?”, “What is the role of urban planning in the social exclusion” and “What are the planning tools that can be used in a fight against homelessness?” I also found it essential to define some concepts, such as home and public space. I especially focused on studying the nature of the public space and sought answers to questions such as “Is public space truly public”. Since the study focuses on homeless people in Helsinki, I included studies from local multidisciplinary fields, such as sociology (Lehikoinen, 2015; The Y-Foundation, 2017) and urban geography (Haapanen, 2017) to my research. The second part of the study, “The local context”, relies on this information together with the statistics from the annual ARA homelessness survey.

0.4 Research Questions and Sub-question

The thesis is built around a literature analysis and an analysis of a public space and through them seeks answers to the following questions:

1. The Right to the Public Space;

Is Public Space equal to different Social Groups?

- What are the main factors in identifying a place as exclusionary or discriminating?
- Does the policy to the public space correspond to the right to the public space?
- How does the identity of a place affect our behaviour?

2. The Policy to the Public Space;

What is the Role of Urban Planning in Social Exclusion?

- Can urban planning instruments contribute in preventing or solving homelessness?
- Can design/planning make a change in how we see and therefore treat people around us?
- How to involve people in planning who are left outside of society?

3. The Power to the Public Space;

How do Homeless People experience and use Public Space?

- Is there different patterns in the use of the public space?
- What makes public spaces more/less approachable for different social groups?/
- What are the main factors for homeless people in experiencing the space unwelcoming or hostile?

01 THEORY: PRIVATE, PUBLIC & TOOLS OF URBAN PLANNING

Glossary

FEANTSA

the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless, is the only major European network that focuses exclusively on homelessness at European level and receives financial support from the European Commission for the implementation of its activities. FEANTSA also works closely with other EU institutions, and has consultative status at the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

ETHOS

European Typology of Homelessness and housing exclusion developed by FEANTSA.

Exclusion Zone

An exclusion zone is an area where people are not allowed to go or where they are not allowed to do a particular thing, for example because it would be dangerous.

Expert by Experience

Someone who is able to articulate lessons and suggestions from their own ‘lived’ experience [of homelessness and health challenges]. Their expertise is based on their own individual experiences, enabling them to speak with authenticity.

Gentrification

The urban renewal process by which a place, especially part of a city, changes from being a poor area to a richer one, where people from a higher social class live.

Hostile-/Defensive Architecture

Intentional design strategy that uses elements of the built environment to guide or restrict behaviour in urban space as a form of crime prevention or order maintenance. It often targets people who use or rely on public space more than others, like people who are homeless and youth, by restricting the behaviours they engage in. Also known as defensive architecture, hostile design, unpleasant design, exclusionary design, or defensive urban design, hostile architecture

is most typically associated with “anti-homeless spikes” – studs embedded in flat surfaces to make sleeping rough, uncomfortable, and impractical.

Housing First

A homeless assistance operating model based on the belief that housing is a human right. The core idea in Housing First is to first provide permanent housing to people experiencing homeless and then move on to solving other issues, such as physical and psychological special needs and help with addictions.

Inclusionary Zoning

A zoning ordinance in a county or municipality which requires low to moderate income individuals be given a share of advantages created by new construction. For example, an allotment of affordable housing for low-income families may be a required zoning ordinance.

NIMBY

The NIMBY abbreviation comes from the words Not in my backyard. The NIMBY phenomenon is referred to when people oppose some construction project that they experience as unpleasant in their neighbourhood. Opposition typically exists against homeless people’s housing services. Central to the NIMBY phenomenon is that the opponents basically consider housing for the homeless to be a good thing, but they just do not want them near themselves.

Participatory Planning

Participatory process aimed at defining, proposing and having enforced a management plan on issues of common interest. Typically, participatory planning is an opportunity to tailor management rules at local/regional scale according to stakeholders needs. With the aim of contributing to the establishment of a bottom-up approach rather than the typical top-down approach, one can also integrate experience based – and research based knowledge. Participation can be defined as “the process of decision making and problem solving, involving individuals and groups who represent diverse interests, expertise and point of view and who act for the good of all those affected by the decisions they make and the actions that follows” (Fisher, 2001a,b).

Rough sleeping

To spend the night in the open; be without a home or without shelter.

Segregation

The policy of keeping one group of people apart from another and treating them differently, especially because of race, sex, religion or social status.

Social Sustainability

A Process of meeting the needs of people and communities today in a way that enables future generations to meet their needs. It includes, but is not limited to, the right to development, the right to health care, access to water and food, education, the right to take part in cultural life, the rights of indigenous peoples, gender equity and diversity, freedom from discrimination, freedom of association, the continuous improvement of living conditions and the right to participate in decisions that impact individual and community well-being.

Public Order Act

The purpose of the Public Order Act is to promote order and security in public places. Until 1 October 2003, a variety of rules and regulations on public order were applied in different parts of Finland. These were harmonised with the introduction of the Public Order Act. The Public Order Act applies to places designated for public use, regardless of the ownership of the place in question. Such places include roads, streets, pavements, market squares, parks, beaches, sports grounds, cemeteries, buildings in public use, vehicles, government offices and other office premises, and restaurants.

Temporary Space

Empty or low-use spaces, such as office buildings, factories and old hospitals, that are used temporarily for other actions.

Temporary Use

A project that aims at introducing the method of temporary use in the urban regeneration process of cities. Often associated with the terms; unofficial, independent, rebellious, experimental and decadence.

“The Right to the City”

The right to the city is an idea and a slogan that was first proposed by Henri Lefebvre in his 1968 book *Le Droit à la ville* and that has been reclaimed more recently by social movements, thinkers and several progressive local authorities alike as a call to action to reclaim the city as a co-created space—a place for life detached from the growing effects that commodification and capitalism have had over social interaction and the rise of spatial inequalities in worldwide cities throughout the last two centuries.

The Y-Foundation

The Y-Foundation offers rental homes for people experiencing homelessness and those who are under a threat of becoming homeless. Cities, municipalities and their property companies sublet our apartments to their residents in need of an own home. The Y-Foundation builds housing units where support services are easy to arrange. They also develop and build state-subsidised rental homes under M2-Kodit. The Y-Foundation also acquires rental dwellings by purchasing individual apartments from housing companies on the free market.

Urban Activism

Social practices of protest and claim-making about urban affairs within specific economic and political contexts—usually, in short, a capitalist society.

1.1 Reasons behind homelessness

There are many reasons behind homelessness as a phenomenon as well as behind the reasons how someone ends up homeless. It is important to understand the complexity of the situation in order to evaluate and examine homelessness with solidarity.

The way we see homeless people affects the way we treat them. It is essential to comprehend that the pathways into and out of homelessness are neither linear nor uniform. David Clapham, Professor of Housing and Urban Studies in the Department of Urban Studies at the University of Glasgow, argues that there are two main ways to understand and deal with the reasons behind homelessness; minimalist and maximalist. The minimalist discourse tends to see homelessness as a personal failing of the individuals concerned. The maximalist discourse focuses on the structural issues that create the context for homelessness (Clapham, 2019).

The structural factors are economical and societal issues which include lack of affordable housing and health care services, system failures and uncertain economical situation. There is a clear connection between weak welfare states, low levels of affordable housing and a large homeless population (Carmona, 2003; Clapham, 2019; Fitzpatrick & Stephens, 2007). Inaccessible, inadequate, unaffordable, undignified, insecure or absent housing are conditions feeding the downward spiral of individual and societal deprivation. In Europe such conditions affect a growing number of people in different ways (Colini, 2019). Personal circumstances and relational problems also play a big role in pathways into homelessness (Jacobs et al., 1999).

“The causes of homelessness reflect an intricate interplay between structural factors, systems failures and individual circumstances.”
(Homeless Hub, 2020)

1.1.1 The effect of Neoliberal Housing Policy

Bad examples of poor housing policy have shown us how things can escalate quickly. The cities in many countries are getting too expensive for the low-income citizens to afford so they have been forced to move out from their homes and to seek shelter from different places. Some are living in their cars, while others end up on the streets. The equation here is quite clear; the more difficult access low-income people have to good quality housing, the more likely they are to be homeless. There is some evidence that neoliberal regimes such as the USA, Australia and the UK have a higher rate of homelessness than other housing regimes. In other words, a neoliberal regime with substantial inequality and little intervention to aid low-income households is likely to feature substantial levels of homelessness (Carmona, 2003; Fitzpatrick & Stephens, 2007; Clapham, 2019). For example, homelessness in the UK was reduced substantially by the Labour governments in the years up to 2010, but has since increased with changes of government and the move towards more neoliberal housing policy (Clapham, 2019).

Many European cities, such as Helsinki, have a substantial amount of apartments kept empty – In 2019, there were 30 000 empty apartments in Helsinki (Official Statistics Finland, 2019). Some of them are secondary apartments, but many of them are investment apartments, which are being kept empty in order to wait for the real estate market prices to increase in value in order to gain a bigger profit (Herrala, 2016; Hypo, 2019; Talouselämä, 2019).

“It is misleading to see homelessness as a static phenomenon, as its causes evolve over time and the experience is often not a one-off event, rather it is a process that can be extended over a considerable period of time.”
(Clapham, 2019)

1.1.2 Future challenge: Climate refugees*

Tens of millions of people will be forced from their homes by climate change in the next decade, creating the biggest refugee crisis the world has ever seen. In 2018, the World Bank estimated that three regions (Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia) will generate 143 million more climate migrants by 2050 (Adamo et al., 2018).

These erratic weather patterns and warming temperatures could essentially make areas of the world uninhabitable, possibly displacing millions, and may make hopes many have of establishing a home, a virtual impossibility (Lieberman, 2015). Today 16 percent of the homeless population in Finland are immigrants (The Y-Foundation, 2019), but the number will most likely be higher in the next few years if action is not implied. The number of climate migrants could be reduced by tens of millions as a result of global action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and with far-sighted development planning (Adamo et al., 2018). Climate change and immigration due to it should be strongly considered in the housing policies. Urban planning tools can be used as an asset to help immigrants to integrate to the new surroundings.

“Countries therefore will need to take a long-term, anticipatory approach to planning so that climate migrants are factored in to overall growth and development strategies.”

(Adamo et al., 2018)

*The term “climate refugee” is not endorsed by UNHCR, and it is more accurate to refer to “persons displaced in the context of disasters and climate change.”

1.2 The Realm of Private: Home

Home is the symbol of privacy, it offers both physical and psychological shelter and comfort (Bahun & Bojana, 2018; Madanipour, 2003). It is by nature a place of rest and recovery. But which requirements does “a home” need to fulfill? Is it only the physical shelter where one has keys to, or is it more than that? How big a role does psychological importance play? The importance of home is critical in our lives and especially the homeless population have had to realize that.

“We have private and social personalities and home is the realm of the former. Home is the place where we hide our secrets and express our private selves. Home is our place of resting and dreaming in safety. More precisely, the role of home as delineator or mediator between the realms of public and private, the transparency of the home as it were, varies greatly.”

(Pallasmaa, 1994)

Without home everything becomes more demanding; keeping or finding a job, taking care of the basic hygiene and especially maintaining physical and mental health. Big part of the homeless population didn't have problems with substance use before they lost their home (Bahun et. al, 2018; Homeless Hub, 2020) Many start to consume alcohol and drugs to be able to cope with the harsh surroundings. It is not easy to get away from the vicious circle of homelessness.

Norwegian architect, Christian Norberg-Schulz, poetically described living [at home] as a way how a person creates a relationship between oneself and the inhumane reality [that is nature] (Vartiainen, 1991). “We could also say that a house is a place where daily life takes place. Daily life represents what is continuous in our existence, and therefore supports us like a familiar ground”. (Norberg-Schulz, 1985 , p. 89)

Home is not only the walls and roof around you, it provides you a control to your private life; who you invite in and who you don't or what you do inside of those walls, it is all up to you. When the privacy of home is denied, the public space plays its role. Therefore, the homeless population has no access to privacy.

“As cities have redeveloped, public space has become a key battleground – a battleground over the homeless and the poor and over the rights of developers, corporations, and those who seek to make over the city in an image attractive to tourists, middle- and upper-class residents, and suburbanites.”

(Mitchell & Staeheli, 2006)

1.3 Public Space

“The fragmentation of the public realm has been accompanied by fear, suspicion, tension and conflict between different social groups. This fear results in the spatial segregation of activities in terms of class, ethnicity, race, age, type of occupation and the designation of certain locales that are only appropriate for certain persons and users.”

(Loukaitou-Sideris, 1996)

1.3.1 The Study of Public Space

Public space and the power relations of it have been widely studied in the academic field in growing numbers (e.g., Carmona et al., 2003, 2008; Gehl & Svarne, 2013; Harvey, 2008; Kilian, 1998; Loukaitou-Sideris, 2018; Low & Smith, 2006; Madanipour, 2003, 2019; Mitchell 2003). The topic has been approached from philosophical, geographical, sociological, historical, political and urban planning/ urbanist aspects amongst others. The multidisciplinary approach is almost fundamental when investigating the public place, since it includes so many factors that have to be taken to account. “The rising attention to the public space is a welcome development, as few people would doubt its value, but we may also wonder whether all these different actors have the same idea of public space, and if so why they have come to such a view.” (Madanipour, 2019, p. 1)

1.3.2 Defining “Public”

There are multiple definitions for the word public. The Oxford Dictionary describes it as the following: “..open or available to, used or shared by, all members of the community; not restricted to private use; also (of a service, fund, amenity, etc.) provided by local or central government for the community and supported by rates and taxes;”(Madanipour, 2003, p. 95). In the Public Order Act of the Finnish law a public place means: a) a road, street, pavement, market square, park, beach, sports field, water area, cemetery or similar area that can be used by the public; b) a building, public service vehicle or similar, such as government office or other office, public transport station, shopping centre, business premises, or a restaurant which is in public use either for the duration of a particular event or otherwise; 2) a built-up area means a densely

built up area as indicated by the relevant traffic sign (Public Order Act, 2 §).

Ali Madanipour, professor of Urban Design defines the word public place/ space as “Public places and spaces, therefore, are public because anyone is entitled to be physically present in them....public space is therefore often provided and managed by the state and is used by the society as a whole.” (Madanipour, 2003, p. 98).

Even though the definition of the public space is as described, the nature of public space has been flickering since the very beginning of the term itself. Throughout history public space hasn't been welcoming for all; women, the elderly, different members of social-, sexual- and ethnic minorities have been denied the right to the public space. The ways of excluding vary substantially; the same way physical obstacles exclude some, particularly the disabled, those with young children or the elderly, psychological barriers can exclude homeless people and lead to further segregation (Carmona, 2008). Moreover, some heavy users of public space have been very actively denied access to it, prominent amongst which are the poor, homeless and teenagers. This leads us to the question a French social theorist Henri Lefebvre was pondering in the early 1900s, “Who has the right to the city?”

1.3.3 Exclusion Zones

Exclusion zones, which are often connected to public spaces, are marked with signs that indicate the unwanted action, such as smoking, skateboarding, driving or loitering. But sometimes the rules are not visible or announced, but one can still sense them. For instance, institutions such as shopping malls and banks are welcoming selected public in, while intruders and undesirables are kept outside. Exclusion in these places is based on fear or an inability to consume. Sociologist Lyn Lofland (1998) describes such spaces “parochial” because they are appropriated by particle groups so whoever wanders feels either like a stranger or a guest, depending how they fit in. Urban spaces are increasingly produced and managed by private agents for private use (Madanipour, 2019) which means that the cities are becoming more exclusive. But what might this mean politically for those who either felt welcomed or excluded from such public spaces? (Low & Smith, 2006.)

“Right to the city is a synonymous to the right to exist”
(Sigh, 2019)



Picture 4: “No Loitering Drinking Begging Soliciting”.

1.4 Policy of the Public Space

“Public policy comprises the means, methods and ways used by authorities to achieve a desired objective.”

(Kukoč, 2015).

Public realm is managed and controlled by public policy, which regulates actions that are allowed or denied in public space. Policy gives direction to an individual performing public functions because it allows them to act or function within laid down guidelines and avoid breaching or jumping procedure. Public policy is also important because it enables governments to protect its citizens against the unethical behaviors of solution, product and service providers (Katebe et al., 2019.) Public policy comprises the means, methods and ways used by authorities to achieve a desired objective, therefore urban planning can be considered as a part of public policy (Kukoč, 2015). In Finland the legislation about the public realm is specified in the Public Order Act.

Nonetheless, the legislation doesn't restrict activities like sleeping in the public space, it is often considered forbidden. The homeless are seen as a problematic group that violates the public policy with their mere presence. Pavel Pospěch, an urban sociology professor, argues in his paper (2020) that, to be recognized as “problematic” in public space, a group must (a) be recognized as a distinct category (categorical visibility), (b) be recognized as a threat to the civil order (moral visibility), and (c) that public policy must have legal instruments to perceive and address the issue (the eyes and arms of public policy).

Finnish Public Order Act

Chapter 2

Endangering public order and security and causing disturbance

Section 3 Disturbing public order and endangering public security

(1) It is prohibited to disturb public order or to endanger public security in a public place by:

- 1) making a noise or causing other similar disturbance;
- 2) making repeated threatening gestures, aggressive movements, verbal threats or other similar threatening behaviour likely to cause fear;
- 3) shooting or throwing objects, or in any other similar manner.

(2) Actions referred to in subsection 1 are also prohibited in other than public places, if the effects of such actions extend to a public place.

Section 16

Public order violation (1) A person who

- 1) disturbs public order or endangers public security as referred to in section 3;
- 2) uses an intoxicating substance in violation of the ban laid down in section 4;
- 3) fails to comply with the duty of care as laid down in section 5 for the owner or occupant of a building or structure or their representative;
- 4) uses a light or advertisement in violation of the ban in section 6(1) or removes or vandalises in violation of subsection 2 of the said section an announcement or notification as referred to in the said subsection;
- 5) purchases or offers sexual services in violation of section 7(1),
- 6) urinates or defecates in violation of the ban laid down in section 7(2),
- 7) organises a performance in violation of section 7(3),
- 8) fails to comply with the duty laid down in section 8 to ensure access to a building,
- 9) possesses a substance suitable for painting graffiti in violation of the ban laid down in section 13,
- 10) fails to comply with the the duty of controlling an animal laid down in section 14(1) or
- 11) violates the ban on horse riding and driving laid down in section 15(1), shall be sentenced for a public order violation to a fine, unless a more severe punishment for the act is provided elsewhere in the law. (2) A sentence of a fine for a public order violation may not be converted into imprisonment. (Public Order Act, 2003)



Picture 5: Gated community in Houston.

1.5 The Role of Urban Planning

”The architecture of our cities is a powerful guide to behaviour, both directly and in its symbolism.”

Andreou, 2015.

One of the main issues I had before I started working on this thesis was the question “can urban planning instruments contribute in the fight against homelessness?” Homelessness is often seen more as a matter that can be affected with political and social means, than a phenomenon urban planning can affect. After studying the topic more, I learned that there are multiple ways to influence preventing homelessness as a planner.

In this chapter, I first discuss one of the main urban planning objectives: equality. Chapter 1.5.3 gives a closer look with a case study about planning and development of a square in Helsinki, where reducing anti-social behaviour was one of the planning objectives. Secondly, chapter 1.6 focuses on describing the phenomenon called “Hostile- or Defensive Architecture” and to find out reasons behind it. Chapter 1.7 suggests that inclusionary zoning is an urban planning tool that could be used in preventing homelessness as well as participatory planning, which will be discussed in chapter 2.5. Ultimately, the role and possibilities of urban activism are discussed in chapter 1.9.

1.5.1 Equality as a Basis of Planning

Equality is one of the main urban planning objectives when designing socially sustainable environments. Socially sustainable environment obliges considering different demographic groups, such as children, elderly people and physically- and mentally disabled people. It stands for equality, justice, democracy, education; integration instead of segregation and communality instead of individualism (Jalkanen et al., 2017). Urban planning instruments can also contribute to the social and demographic structure of the cities. Applying balance with different housing solutions (affordable housing, student housing, condominiums, owner-occupied housing, etc.) in the planning process can prevent segregation (Blokland & Harding, 2014; Bramley et al., 2006; Clapman, 2019). The underprivileged community often ends up living in the cheaper rental apartments in the outskirts of the cities while the central areas

are inhabited by people, who can afford it. This, unfortunately, often shows in the quality of the neighborhoods and therefore increases segregation and imbalance in the society.

Even though equality is emphasised in the urban planning objectives, often the designing task is quite against it; “How to create public spaces that wouldn’t encourage ‘anti-social behaviour’?” Designing canopies or benches to public spaces that have a potential of being occupied by homeless people is often out of the table. Then again, designing temporary shelters to the public spaces might not be considered as good planning either (Lapintie, 2014).

Urban planning, like every public function, must consider the social needs of all the inhabitants of the city, including homeless people.”
(Meda, 2009)

1.5.2 Sustainable Urban Development

Jordi Bosch Meda, an independent researcher, argues in his article that the ultimate aim of urban planning is to deliver a certain level of quality of life for citizens and thus ensure the security and well-being of a city’s inhabitants (Meda, 2009). The Sustainable development strategies’ focus is on five dimensions: economic sustainability, ecological sustainability, sustainable spatial development, cultural continuity and social sustainability (Ahmadi & Toghyani, 2011). Social objectives are included in the concepts of sustainable development and sustainability, which have become basic principles in the urban planning field (Bramley et al., 2006; Meda, 2019). It is impossible to separate the physical fabric of the city from the economic and social needs of its inhabitants, therefore they must also be considered in urban planning. The target of sustainable urban development process is to achieve the status of “sustainability” in urban communities and also to create or to strengthen the sustainability’s characteristics of economic, social, cultural and environmental cities (Ahmadi & Toghyani, 2011).

“Economic, social and environmental issues must be considered in urban planning, and, consequently, urban planning cannot be limited to addressing only the physical planning of the city.”
(Meda, 2019)

Picture 6 (p. 35): Valentine’s Day event for the homeless in Vaasanpuistikko.

1.5.3 Case: Piritori

Even though empathy and equality are emphasized in the urban planning objectives and the utopian space that planners are always after is the “Urban Living Room for All”, quite often the designing task is quite against it: How to create public spaces that wouldn’t encourage “anti-social behaviour”? Urban renewal interventions have manifested in places where the residential concentration of disadvantaged groups has been considered a negative issue for neighbourhood image and social cohesion (Sezer, 2020).

The thorn in the City of Helsinki’s flesh has been for a while a square in Sörnäinen, that the locals call ‘Piritori’ (translates into Amphetamine market). This infamous spot in the area of Kallio has a reputation of people loitering, drinking alcohol and dealing drugs and there are always either some security guards or police patrolling around. There have been some planning competitions about this square and how to reduce the anti-social behaviour there (Jokinen, 2016a, 2016b). The objective was to create ‘a place for people’, which somehow suggests that previously there has not been people, per se.





Picture 8: Concrete spikes under a bridge in Guangzhou, China.

1.6 Hostile- / Defensive Architecture

“By making our environment more hostile, we become more hostile within it.”

(Andreou, 2015)

Like the topic suggests, there has been some debate about what is the right term to the phenomenon when architecture is used as a way to exclude and/or restrict (Lo, 2017). The term that people choose to use often reflects their attitude; those who prefer the word “defensive architecture” tend to see it as a justifiable method to restrict the use of certain places or areas. The ones preferring the word “hostile architecture” emphasise the aggressive nature of the term and do not see good architecture or design as something that could be combined with hostile features. In this chapter I have decided to use the term “hostile architecture” based on my own perception.

1.6.1 “Don’t make Yourself at Home”

Homeless people often prefer public areas when sleeping rough, mainly because visibility provides safety. When you are carrying all your belongings with you it becomes crucial to keep them and yourself safe while you are sleeping. Public spaces have more people and surveillance around them, which provides certain security. Preferable places for rest have typically been parks and their benches and covered places that provide shelter from rain. For some, seeing homeless people in public creates uncomfortable feelings; they are an eyesore that reminds us of the injustice of our society while some might also be afraid of them and try to avoid any encounters with them. There seems to exist a certain “out of sight, out of mind” -mentality when it comes to keeping the homeless out from the public.

Since public space is often linked to commercial use, it is often controlled by it (Carmona et al. 2008). Business owners often do not appreciate homeless people occupying the near presence of their establishments, because they are seen as bad for business, -if you don’t have the money to consume, you are not welcome. Therefore there are many, more or less visible and aggressive ways to design the unwanted groups out. The typical controlling ways are CCTV cameras and guards, but there are also some designing methods that suggest to the public what they can or can not do.

“...public property is the only place that homeless people – who otherwise have no place over which they have private property rights – can live or act autonomously.”

(Low & Smith, 2006)

1.6.2 Designing the Homeless out from the Public

Hostile architecture is where architectural elements and the public realm are used to control human behavior (De Fine Licht, 2017; Lo, 2017). It has been around for hundreds of years, but has only recently gained publicity and interest. The very shape of our cities has started to reflect our hostility toward the homeless, in the form of design elements that prevent them from seeking refuge in public spaces (Atkinson & While, 2015). Hostile architecture can involve gating off the doorways and left-over urban spaces, which provide some shelter for those who have to sleep rough in cities. More insidious is the use of small metal spikes to make surfaces impossible to sleep on. Hostile architecture is also often used in subtle ways to guide, cajole or remove people who are unwanted in certain spaces. Benches that have center arms or dividers, that take on odd shapes, or that otherwise would not allow a person

to lie down, can also be classified as defensive architecture. Serpentine bench (Picture 11, p. 41) by Dean Harvey wasn't initially designed to deter rough sleepers, and skaters, but when people noticed this feature, it was used as a marketing tool (Lo, 2017). Many of the anti-homeless designs are not easily detectable and tend to go unnoticed by most people; its discomfort only apparent to those who are being excluded.

The lack of something obvious in the public space, like benches or public toilets, is also a way of control. Toronto-based urban planning researcher Cara Chelley defines the lack of such things as “ghost amenities,” (D’Arcy, 2019). Hostile architecture can exclude vulnerable members of our community, such as people living rough, but also youth and elderly people, from opportunities to interact with the broader community. The psychological effect is devastating.

It is important to ask why so much effort is being taken to exclude the homeless as we “regenerate” city centers. The reasoning behind the phenomenon is that it reduces littering, vandalism and crime and increases the feeling of security and order, even though damage is not done to property or street furniture, and those sleeping rough move on in the morning. Designing out homelessness appears to be part of a wider ambition to make consumers and investors feel secure, while avoiding direct human intervention. Growing



Picture 9: A sophisticated form of Hostile Architecture



Picture 10: Serpentine-bench.

social inequalities create a nurturing environment for these architectures of protection, control and exclusion. Homelessness, of course, continues – but in places at some remove from urban consumers (Atkinson & While, 2015).

“When you’re designed against you know it. Other people might not see it, but you will. The message is clear: you are not a member of the public, at least not of the public that is welcome here.”
Howell, 2014.

1.6.3 Hostile Architecture in Finland

Hostile architecture has started to reach public interest and media attention in Finland during the last years. One of the most popular topics have been the armrests that have appeared to park benches. The official purpose of them is to provide physical support for people with immobilities in getting up (Niiranen & Oksanen, 2015), but it seems pretty obvious that it is also there to prevent sleeping on the bench. Even though the methods are mostly subtle in Finland, some harsh solutions have also been introduced.

The mall of Munkkivuori was on the headlines in 2019, because there had been some radical measures to get rid of loitering and anti-social behaviour (Ikonen, 2020; Siren, 2019). All the existing benches had been moved away and sharp metal blades had been installed to other areas where people liked to sit down (Picture 11). In this case hostile architecture did not only discriminate against the homeless but also especially the elderly. The debate about either to bring back the removed benches continues.



Picture 11: Metal plates that were installed to Munkkivuori mall to prevent sitting.

1.7 Inclusionary Zoning

“Inclusionary zoning is a policy that was first developed in the 1970s in response to exclusionary and often racially segregated “snob zoning.” (Schneider, 2018)

Inclusionary Zoning (IZ), alternatively called Inclusionary Housing (IH), is a tool designed to encourage the private market to subsidize affordable housing with a set of controls and incentives (McFarlane, 2009; Meda, 2009; Mishra, 2017; Schneider, 2018). IZ programmes’ common characteristics is that builders reserve a specific proportion of the area which is being developed to affordable housing (McFarlane, 2009). IZ was developed in the U.S. in the 1970s in response to the widespread trend of “exclusionary zoning” (also sometimes known as “snob zoning”), which includes zoning practices like mandating minimum lot sizes and other legal loopholes advocated by NIMBYs who seek to prevent the construction of affordable housing in their neighborhoods (Schneider, 2017). In this way, IZ is a tool of desegregation.

” Charting housing and urban planning policies together makes it possible to distribute affordable housing, and thus households on low and very low incomes, throughout the city, thereby avoiding segregation and the concentration of poverty and improving social cohesion. ” (Meda, 2009)

Providing affordable housing, as stated in the chapter 1.1.1, is a vital requirement in the fight against homelessness, therefore inclusionary zoning could play a key role in preventing and solving homelessness (Meda, 2009). “Both research and practice suggest that inclusionary zoning is a desirable way of creating affordable housing and workplaces for the urban poor and fostering social inclusion by capturing resources created through the marketplace” (Mishra, 2017, p. 8). As a tool of desegregation, IZ creates social cohesion and therefore promotes social sustainability. In the European context, the aim of “social mix” has been generalised in urban policies in one way or another (Minton, 2002; Musterd, 2003; Scanlon and Whitehead, 2007) and has been explicitly enshrined in the legislation of several countries such as the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden, Finland and others (Meda, 2009).

Although IZ is one of the main tools cities have for maintaining neighborhood diversity, and keeping high-opportunity areas affordable (Schneider, 2017), it often causes NIMBY reactions in the neighbourhoods against social housing (Meda, 2009).

Meda (2009) argues, that when it comes to the economy, there are at least three key economic reasons for supplying affordable housing through urban planning: it improves the distribution of resources that govern public intervention, it helps counter the problems of economic accessibility to housing, and it taxes the enrichment of land owners who see the value of their property increase only as a result of urban planning, i.e. it is a way of recovering planning gains or increments in land values (Meda, 2009).

”Inclusionary zoning is a response by planners to criticisms of the exclusionary effects of minimum lot size zoning policy.” (McFarlane, 2009)

1.8 Participatory Urban Planning

“Participatory design (PD) is an attitude about a force for change in the creation and management of environments for people”. (Sanoff, 2012 p. 1) In practice, PD is co-operating with different non-professional stakeholders, who usually are affected by the designing project. The philosophy of it relies on democracy via collective, decentralized decision-making and its strength is the movement that doesn't follow professional limits and cultures (Sanoff, 2006; Sanoff, 2012; Kukoč, 2015). The cycle of PD consists of a continuum of different phases: initiation, planning and design, implementation, evaluation and research, and maintenance (Horelli & Saad-Sulonen, 2010; Figure 1). Since PD processes vary with different practitioners, a variety of methods are used. Yet all PD programs should have the following values involved in the process: Participants are experts in what they do, whose voices need to be heard; Collaboration of participants from diverse backgrounds is an asset, that helps to arise design ideas and solutions, and, It's preferable for PD practitioners to spend time with users in the user's environment. Participatory design professionals share the position that group participation in decision-making is the most obvious (Sanoff, 2012). Today PD processes are being applied to urban design, planning, and geography amongst other fields of design (Harnecker & Bartolome, 2019). Research findings suggest that positive outcomes are associated with solutions being informed by users' tacit knowledge (Spinuzzi, 2005).

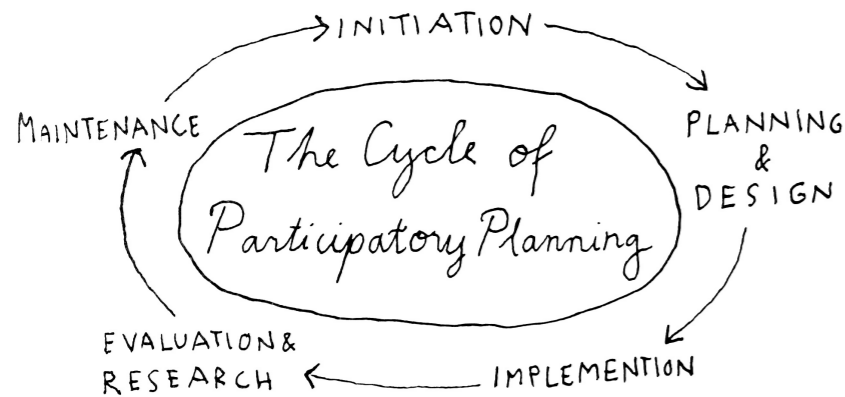
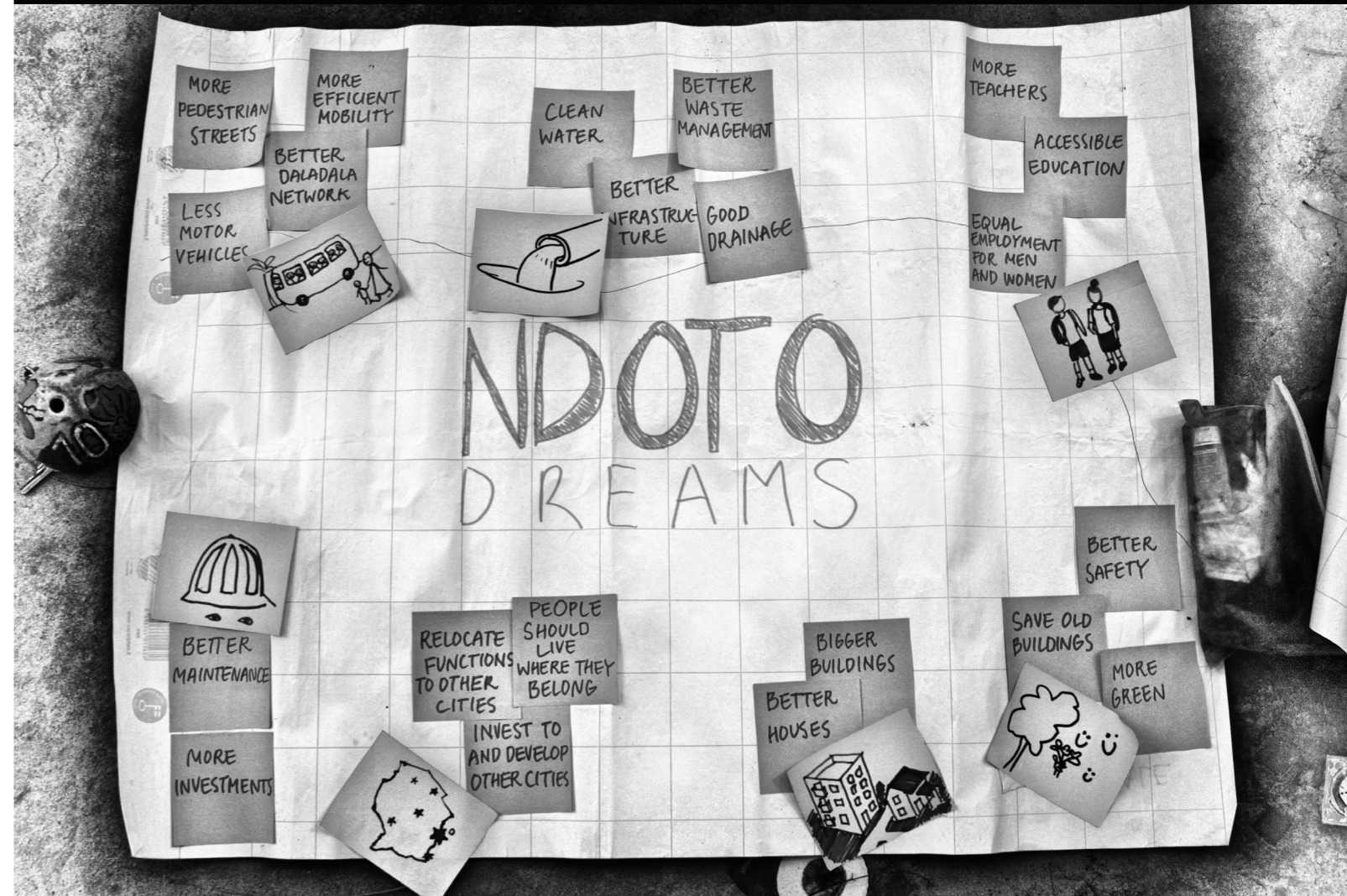


Figure 1.



Picture 12: Paper full of Post-it notes; a valuable participatory planning tool.

1.8.1 Aiming for Social Sustainability

According to Sanoff, the importance of community participation is based on the principle that the environment works better if citizens are active and involved in its creation and management instead of being treated as passive consumers (Sanoff, 2000). Community participation through interactive dialogue has been regarded in recent years as a fundamental element of social sustainability (Colantonio, 2019).

Social sustainability includes the following core concepts; basic needs and social wellbeing, social capital, equity and social and cultural dynamism (Bramley et al, 2006). Participation allows communities to express their needs and aspirations, which subsequently impacts the policy-making processes, and focuses on the democratic right to be involved in the public policy process. PD is a process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to manage resources to produce sustainable and equitable improvements in their quality of life (Sanoff, 2000).

1.8.2 Challenges of Participatory Planning

One of the major challenges of PD is to ensure the democratic process. Democratic participation can raise awareness of the cultural and social qualities of localities at the policy-making stage and avoid conflicts that may emerge in policy implementation later (Rydin & Pennington, 2000; Al-Sabouni, 2016). Reaching people from different social groups, in this case, the homeless, is vital for democracy, but often challenging. Large segments of the population in all modern nations are in reality powerless to significantly affect the political decisions, policies, and actions of their societies (Sanoff, 2006). With homeless people, the mere absence of a home and therefore address and/or access to the internet can affect them so that they can not participate in PD projects or get informed about them. When involving homeless communities or individuals to PD, it is also necessary to acknowledge the trust issues of the homeless towards the policy makers. In Helsinki, there have been two recent approaches to get the homeless population involved; engaging experts by experience i.e. people who have personally experienced homelessness in one way or another, and the Kaupunkiluotsi (eng. borough liaisons) programme, implemented by the city of Helsinki.

Experts by experience are generally people, who have a history of being

homeless, but have moved on with their lives. “Being an expert by with experience demands a certain degree of commitment to the work, which can be difficult if the person still lacks an apartment of their own.” (The Y-Foundation, 2017, p. 79) People with lived experience of homelessness have been involved in the National Programme to reduce long term homelessness along with projects by No Fixed Abode, an NGO that was founded by the homeless themselves in 1986 (Vva ry, n.d). The point of view of people with first hand experience of homelessness is crucial for building the right kinds of services. Although the primary role of people with first hand experience is to bring knowledge and insight into the work on homelessness, expertise by experience includes much more than simply answering queries, such as cooperating with authorities or attending working groups where work on homelessness is planned. (The Y-Foundation, 2017).

“The most valuable thing is raw data from the field. If a formerly homeless person trains as a licensed practical nurse, for example, the training immediately changes their way of thinking. That is why it is important to always hear out those who have the latest experiences of what it means to be homeless in Finland and what measures will take things forward”, Jussi Lehtonen, Supported Housing Manager of the organisation of the homeless, No Fixed Abode NGO.

Furthermore, The Borough Liaisons Programme (Kaupunkiluotsi) by the city of Helsinki, was designed to reach different stakeholders of the city, in order to involve them into the development projects of Helsinki and to reduce the gap between the citizens and the city officials by offering an opportunity to participate and to make an impact.

Since 2018, each greater district has had its own “borough liaison”, a person, whose responsibility is to help the citizens to find the right channels for operating in Helsinki. Borough liaisons provide knowledge and consulting about participatory budgeting and how to participate and make a difference in the district. They also develop and implement participatory budgeting, collaborating with the different stakeholders (Helsinki City website, 2018). Borough liaisons have been visiting homeless shelters and day centers, such as Finnish Blue Ribbon Foundation in Vallila, to hear out the developing ideas of the homeless population.

“- The aim is to make all citizens join in. Even those who have not participated before”(Panu Saloranta in Helsinki City website, 2018)

1.9 Urban Activism

activism

noun [U] POLITICS

The use of direct and noticeable action to achieve a result, usually a political or social one.

The use of direct and public methods to try to bring about esp. social and political changes that you and others want.

(Cambridge Dictionary, 2020).

1.9.1 Right to the City

“The term “right to the city” refers to both a concept developed by Marxist geographers and a slogan adopted by young people, the poor, and individuals and groups around the world who feel they have been excluded from aspects of city life” (Harvey, 2008, p. 270). This sentence, originally stated by French philosopher Henri Lefebvre in 1968 (Mitchell, 2003), is a baseline for a thought that the city belongs to all. It encourages questioning the ownership of the city, therefore working as a ladder for citizen participation and activism.

Historically rooted in the anarchist movement, but revived and popularized by the alter-globalization movement, urban activism involves a shift in relations to the state (Martínez López et al., 2019). This is rooted in the autonomous criticism of political representation and refusal of institutionalized hierarchical organizational structures and leaders. Urban activism, or post-autonomous urban social movements have been described in their relation to the state as reactions to the several crises and the emergence of neoliberal urbanism (Larsen & Scheller, 2019). “The neoliberal urban spectacle is supported by events and festivals set up to support commercialism, dominated by commercial messages and control of large corporations” (Madanipour, 2019, p. 40).

Urban activism can take multiple forms; it is a combination of autonomous strategies, such as direct action and civil disobedience from less radical urban gardening to more controversial squatting. It is often a statement to point out elements that need improving in our societies: Urban gardening indicates the need for greener urban environments and local-, self-sufficient food production; urban art reacts to ownership of the city’s visual landscapes and to the dominant commercial state of it; taking over

empty or low-use space is a counter phenomenon to privatization of public space; squatting is a strong statement against neoliberal housing markets and often supporting marginal groups, like Hafensstraße, a squatted house in Hamburg, that has hosted homeless, youth, political groups and refugees, and thus become a symbolic reference point in the struggle for self-organized and affordable housing for many urban activists (Larsen & Scheller, 2019). In many cases the sense of creating a community is also an important factor.

“Meanwhile, a growing body of architects, urbanists and planners, like-minded in their desire to “actually practice [their] criticism” spatially, embarks on an often coinciding path of ‘alternative practice’. An ‘urban’ dimension is bound up with entering the social and spatial arena of public space.”

(Geib, 2013)

1.9.2 Temporary Spaces

Urban activism can be used as a tool to claim and develop space. Helsinki, for instance, has a lot of potential empty or low-use spaces, such as office buildings* and old hospitals that do not fulfill the modern requirements (Malmberg, 2018). Temporary use of urban space stands for projects that utilize (with or without permission) urban spaces that are out of use, either temporarily or permanently (Overmeyer, 2007). Temporary projects can work as urban catalysts that re-define the identity of a place, therefore it has become a major urban trend, attracting increasing popular, policy and academic attention (Bengts et al., 2003; Lehtovuori & Ruoppila, 2011; Madanipour, 2018; Temel, 2006;). The trajectory of temporary use can sometimes continue so that the use stabilizes as permanent, primary use.

In the following chapters I introduce two local projects I have been involved with: Picnic at the Metro Station and Sompasauna. In both of them temporary space has been utilized and activated by urban activism.

*12,3% of office buildings were empty in the year 2019 (Helsingin seudun suunnat, 2020).



1.9.3 Do You have a Permission to be Here?

The lack of non-commercial public space becomes more obvious during the winter time in cities like Helsinki, where the weather is not suitable for spending time outdoors. There are also many dead- and low-use spaces that could be utilized and urban activists have developed different tactics how to do so. Jaakko Keso, an urban activist and a reporter for Yle, decided to try what would happen if a dead corner of a metro station would be used for having a picnic with a group of people. The event was published on Facebook and no official permissions were applied for it. The event was held on 10.2.2018 and about ten people participated in it. First, the turf was set on the floor to mimic grass and then people set up some blankets and a parasol, and sat down to eat their picnic snacks. It took less than ten minutes before the guards came to ask if the people had a permission to be there and then told them to go away. Keso called the Helsinki Region Transport customer service to ask what is the policy in this type of situation. The answer was that if you don't have a permission, you are not allowed to stay there. The customer service person also pointed out that if everybody would act this way, there would be people sitting in every corner, and would that be nice then?

"How would you feel if there were people sitting like that in every corner?"

"I think it would actually be rather nice!"

Since people showed support towards this event in social media, Keso decided to approach the mayor to get an official permission to reorganize the metro picnic. The permission was granted for the following Saturday and a new Facebook event was made for it. More people participated for the second metro picnic than for the first one and this time the guards could not evict them. The atmosphere was relaxed and joyful and the event did not cause any disturbance. Bypassers were intrigued and commented that it is nice to see something like this in a metro station. Some pointed out that there are not many places in the city for young people to spend time so spaces like this would be welcome to the city.

Keso, 2018 - Yle Kioski. Valtasimme metroaseman. 9.3.2018.

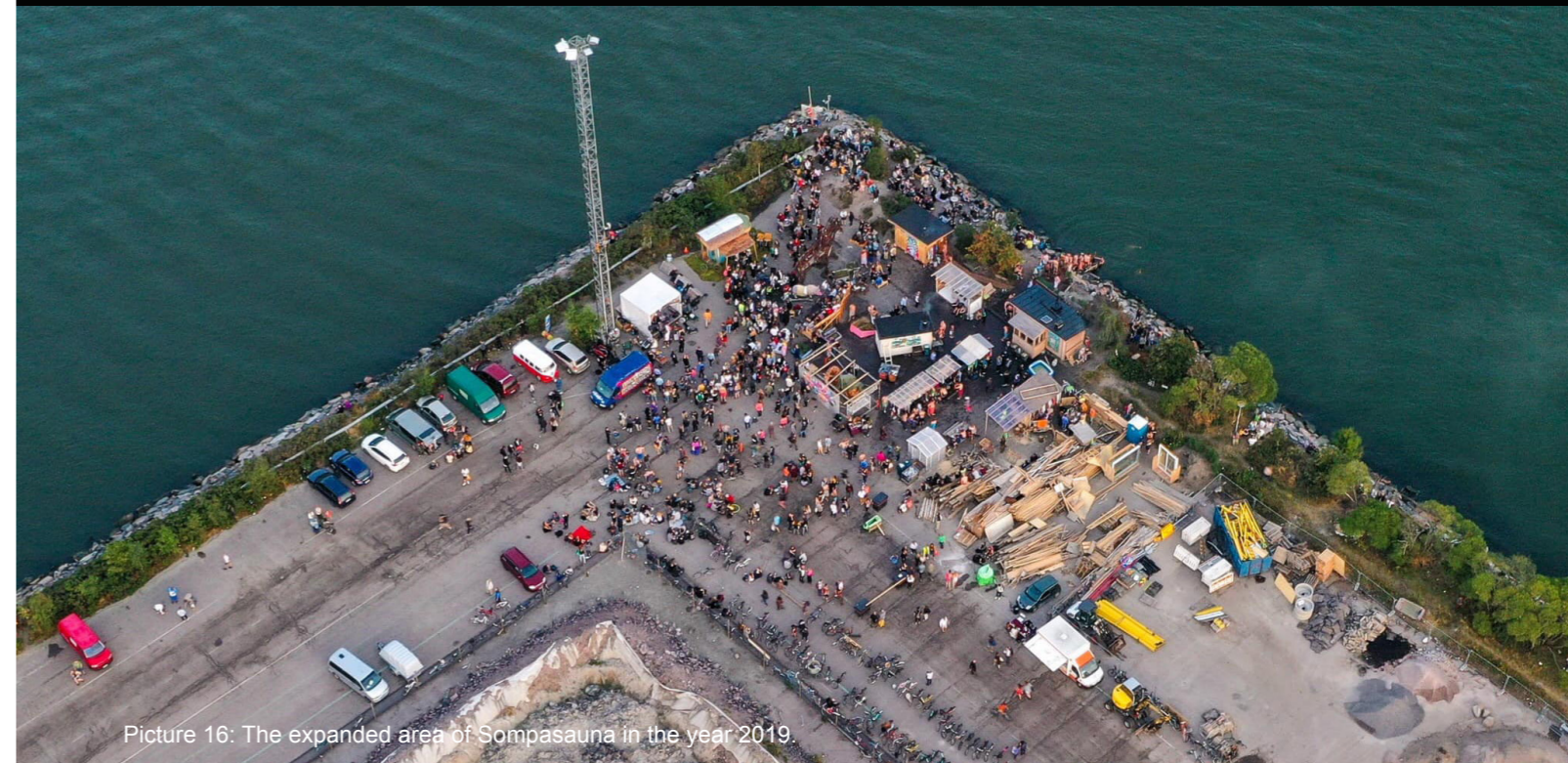
1.9.4 Case: Sompassauna

Sompassauna was originally an unofficial project in the district of Kalasatama, an old industrial harbour, which was going through an urban renewal to become a new housing district. The first version of the sauna (Picture 15) was built in 2011, when the area was still undeveloped. It was built out of materials that people found laying around at the site, without any detailed plans. The site was in the southern end of the island, right next to the Helsinki's zoo, so it was possible to go swimming after the sauna and hear the lions roam. The main idea was that the sauna was free and open for everyone and there was a sign summarising the philosophy of this place: "Built by people for the people". The sauna became very popular and even though the city demolished it the first year, it was rebuilt (with more planning involved) the next year by people who had liked the idea.

In the following years Sompassauna received a lot of attention from the media, such as Helsingin Sanomat and Finnair's magazine, "Blue Wings", and was rated as the best public sauna in Finland in Tripadvisor. Therefore the city of Helsinki gave a temporary permit for the project, which had grown during the years to include three saunas.

Sompassauna, as well, is a statement about the lack of public spaces in Helsinki and in this case, saunas. The Finnish sauna culture is so strong that some might even consider sauna as a human right. Still, all the public saunas in Helsinki are chargeable, except for Sompassauna.

Picture 15: First version of Sompassauna in the year 2011.



Picture 16: The expanded area of Sompassauna in the year 2019.

PART 2: THE LOCAL CONTEXT

This chapter focuses on investigating homelessness in Finland and more specifically in Helsinki. It presents the study methods and then investigates at homelessness mainly through statistics and literature: First, I introduce the methods I have used to collect the data. Then, in chapter 3.1, I take a look at the statistics and seek reasons behind the exceptionally decreasing numbers of homelessness in Finland. Thirdly, the area of Helsinki and its history of homelessness are taken to an examination in chapter 3.2 and chapter 3.2.3 gives a closer look to the historical context of homelessness through an exhibition about Johan Knut Harju, a self-taught writer and a homeless alcoholic. The areas of visible homelessness, which I selected for the study, are presented in chapter 3.3. Finally, in chapter 3.4 I go through the data I collected with direct observation, which I conducted in the center of Helsinki.

Finland is a harsh environment to be homeless. Long cold winters make the living on the streets dangerous and many seek shelter with alternative methods – some even commit minor crimes to get to spend the coldest months in the prison cells. One of the darkest periods in Finland's history of homelessness was the autumn of 1967, when 40–50 homeless alcoholics died due to sub-zero temperatures at night (The Y-Foundation, 2017). Today the numbers of rough-sleepers have decreased to 740 and most of the homeless are temporarily staying with friends or relatives (ARA, 2020). Finland is the only country in Europe where the homelessness numbers have been decreasing (Housing First Europe, 2020) thanks to determined action plans. The adaptation of the Housing First programme has played a fundamental role in the process (World Habitat, 2017; The Y-Foundation, 2017). However, homelessness still exists and in some areas of Helsinki it is very visible.

02 METHODS

When gathering data from human behaviour, it is important to include ethical considerations. The ethical principles for research with human participants have been drawn up to support researchers and research groups in protecting the people participating in the research (Korhonen et. al, 2019). In this study, I have followed the ethical principles of research with human participants. I have promised to respect the dignity and autonomy of human research participants and to conduct the research so that it does not cause significant risks, damage or harm to research participants, communities or other subjects of research. Therefore, I have protected the anonymity of the participants by not mentioning personal data, such as names, pictures or any details that might compromise their anonymity. For the data collection in the day centers, I applied and received permission to conduct a research with human participants. The research has been self-funded, thus there is no third partner who might benefit from it.

2.1 Community-based Participatory Research

“Community-based participatory research (CBPR) involves forming research partnerships with non-academic stakeholders to develop and execute a research project based on a particular community identified problem or issue.” (Leavy, 2017, p. 224.)

I have been working in NGOs providing homeless services as a volunteer; cooking food, talking with people and organizing events. The research questions started to develop while volunteering and communicating with the homeless. Since I started to work on my thesis, my objective, along with spending time with people, was to gather information about how the homeless experience the city. I usually visited the day center once or twice a week and talked with people, while having coffee with them. The conversations were very informal, I did not interview anyone, rather focused on listening to what people wanted to share with me. I had to approach the Roma people in another way, since they didn't come to the day centers I was volunteering in. I encountered them in the streets and in the parks of Kallio. To support the CBPR method, I applied art-based research, which through the weekly drawing and painting sessions, helped to create trust between

me and the day center customers. I used the data I received with CBPR to choose the locations that I wanted to include in the study for closer analysis.

2.2 Direct Observation

For the site analysis, I collected data by using direct observation. Direct observation, also known as observational study, is a method of collecting evaluative information in which the evaluator watches the subjects in their usual environment without altering that environment. The researcher observes public life and takes notes of certain activities and patterns in the public space. This manual method gives the observer an opportunity to use one's senses, which is critical for understanding public life (Gehl & Svarne, 2013).

I first participated in the walking tours of Hima&Strada, an organisation providing “homeless tours” in Helsinki. The guides are experts by experience in the homelessness field and their objective is to change attitudes towards the homeless and to further societal change (Hima & Strada, 2020). Each tour was based on the experiences of the guides, accompanied with historical facts and urban knowledge.

Subsequently, I went to selected locations with visible homelessness to observe, collect data and document. I conducted three observation tours (24.3., 3.4. and 7.4.2020) and spent the same amount of time every time (from 08:00 to 18:00) in the same places. I made notes, drew sketches, took pictures, listened and had short conversations with people.

The observation tours were vital for investigating how the homeless use the public space and how they are treated in it. It also gave me a better view about which places in the city are truly open for everyone; if there are places for rest, washing your hands, using the restroom or to socialize with others.

2.3 Art-based Research

Patricia Leavy, PhD, an internationally recognized leader in research design and arts-based research (ABR), describes ABR as following “Art-based research practices are a set of methodological tools used by researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data generation, analysis, interpretation, and presentation. These emerging

tools adapt the tenets of the creative arts in order to address social research questions in holistic and engaged ways in which theory and practice are intertwined” (Leavy, 2015, p. 4).

During the autumn 2019, I started organizing an art course at one day center with a theme “self portrait”. The customers were not all necessarily homeless, but most of them had experienced homelessness at some point of their lives. The objectives of the art course were to learn different techniques and to express oneself visually, spend time together and to see oneself in a different perspective and hopefully to gain self-confidence through it. During the lessons I talked with the customers, guided them if necessary and participated myself in the drawing action. I sketched the people I talked with and later made a harsh color drawing based on the sketch, which I used as a model for the final oil on canvas painting. I went through this process in order to protect the anonymity of the subjects. The portraits I made during the art-based research, focus on four different social groups; young women, ex convicts, the Roma and the most common group; elderly men. The reason why I selected these four groups is because they form the most alarming groups of the homeless people. Especially the amount of young homeless women has been growing in Finland, which is concerning. The theme for the Night of the Homeless in 2019 was the homeless women, which indicates how severe the situation is. The second reason was to get different perspectives to the study. The urban experience of a 70-year old man is most likely very different from a 18-year old girl’s experience and especially the Roma have their own unique way of coping in urban life.

The investigation about the areas that I included in the study was a combination of direct observation and art-based research. I spent time in the locations, observing, sketching and in some cases painting. I wanted to paint the places without the people, as if they were invisible in the picture. The aim was to focus on the atmosphere and to analyze it. What are the key factors in the nature of the urban space and how the experience varies with different social groups?

03 DATA: HOMELESSNESS IN FINLAND

3.1 The Numbers of Finnish Homelessness

Since the mid 1980’s tackling homelessness has almost continuously been a focus of Government programs in Finland. At the end of 2019, there were 4,600 homeless living alone in Finland, which is 280 less than in 2018. Homelessness decreased for the seventh consecutive year. Two-thirds (3,120 people) of the homeless living alone were temporarily staying with friends or relatives. Approximately 19% of the long-term homeless are in this group. 740 homeless lived outside, in stairwells and temporary shelters. There were 430 homeless people living in dormitories and hostels. A total of 310 homeless people stayed in institutional units. On average, one in four people in these groups is classified as long-term homeless. The data on homelessness is based on the annual housing market survey prepared by ARA — the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland. Reports address developments in homelessness by making comparisons with figures from the previous year. The data is collected from municipalities at the end of each year. (ARA, 2020).

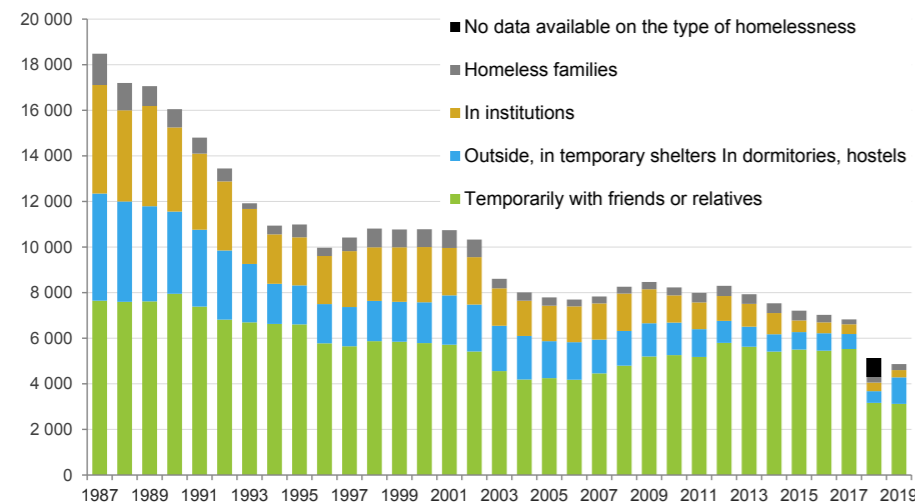


Figure 1. Homelessness in Finland 1987-2019.

Comparable data on homelessness has been available since 1987 when there were almost 19 000 homeless people in the country. Since then the number of homeless people has decreased thanks to determined action plans. Also long-term homelessness has decreased significantly since the PAAVO* programmes were introduced by the Finnish government, which made the Housing First approach the default for addressing homelessness in Finland. There are almost no rough sleepers in Finland now. As the numbers show, there has been important reductions in homelessness, but there is still important work to do (Housing First Europe, 2020).

3.1.1 Municipal Strategies to Prevent Homelessness

The aim of the project Municipal Strategies to Prevent Homelessness - Early Intervention, Social Inclusion and Supported Housing is to create and strengthen the structures of expertise through experience and customer inclusion and to test new approaches to dealing with homelessness. In practice this means the building of multidisciplinary networks at local level, identification of the paths leading to homelessness, risk groups and multi-service customers, drawing up of preventive measures and the using of experts through experience in different stages of the process. The project’s key impact in the short-term will be a reduction in homelessness (The Y-Foundation, 2019; Housing First Europe, 2020).

* Programmes (Paavo I and Paavo II) to reduce long-term homelessness during the years 2008–2011 ja 2012–2015. The programme covered ten cities with the largest percentage of homeless people (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere, Lahti, Jyväskylä, Oulu, Joensuu, Kuopio and Turku), which signed letters of intent with the state administration. The target was to halve long-term homelessness by year 2011 by creating sustainable and permanent solutions (Kaakkinen, J. 2012) At the end of 2015, PAAVO came to an end. According to the Finnish proverb, “Paavo has done his job, it is time for Paavo to go” (Culchane et. al 2015).



Picture 18: A dwelling in Ruskeasu.

3.2 History of Homelessness in Helsinki

The Continuation War fought between Finland and the Soviet Union ended in 1944, after which war veterans flowed into the capital and other big cities in hopes of finding work. At the same time, 430,000 people evacuated from territories ceded to the Soviet Union were looking for homes in Finland (The Y-Foundation, 2017).

After the 1960's the number of homeless people went up in the southern cities of Finland (Väliaho, 2020). Housing market could not keep up with the rapid urbanization movement and families were prioritized/ first on the list to get rental apartments. This made it almost impossible to get an apartment for single men, who often ended up sleeping rough. Some of them moved to the swamp-area at Mankkaa, near the city's landfill. The men living at the swamp were often from poor backgrounds and from different parts of Finland. Most of them came to Helsinki to look for work from the construction sites, but since many of them were traumatized by war, they ended up seeking comfort from alcohol and then losing their homes. The swamp was one of the only places where to seek shelter and same-minded people (Väliaho, 2020).

3.2.1 The Men (and Women) of the Forest

Juha-Pekka Vartiainen wrote an article, called "Asumisen toinen todellisuus" (eng. "The other reality of living") about the vagabonds living at the swamp of Mankkaa for *Arkkitehti* -magazine in 1991 (*Arkkitehti* 7-8/91, pp. 91-98). He visited some of these shanty towns and analyzed them, with an architect's perspective. Vartiainen hoped to find plain buildings from these sites; houses where only the essential elements matter, since all the additional has been stripped off.

The people Vartiainen visited were living next to the city dump, in small scattered communities. City dump provided both food and materials for building, but also privacy. The people had practiced civil obedience by taking the right to claim this land. Even though a community of some sort existed, all the buildings had their own, rather big, territories away from the others and everybody was responsible to build their own houses without help of the neighbours. The dwellings were small, -just big enough to fit the

essential functions (bed and kitchen), but some had added throughout the years some additional features, such as saunas and storages.

Vartiainen analyzed that the reason behind seeking solitude and isolation is in the low self-esteem of these people, but when they were asked about their lifestyles, they described that they were seeking independence and used the keywords “freedom” and a “peace of your own” (Vartiainen, 1991).



Picture 19: Drawing by Johan Knut Harju from the exhibition “Helsinki Hobo”

3.2.2 Exhibition: Helsinki Hobo

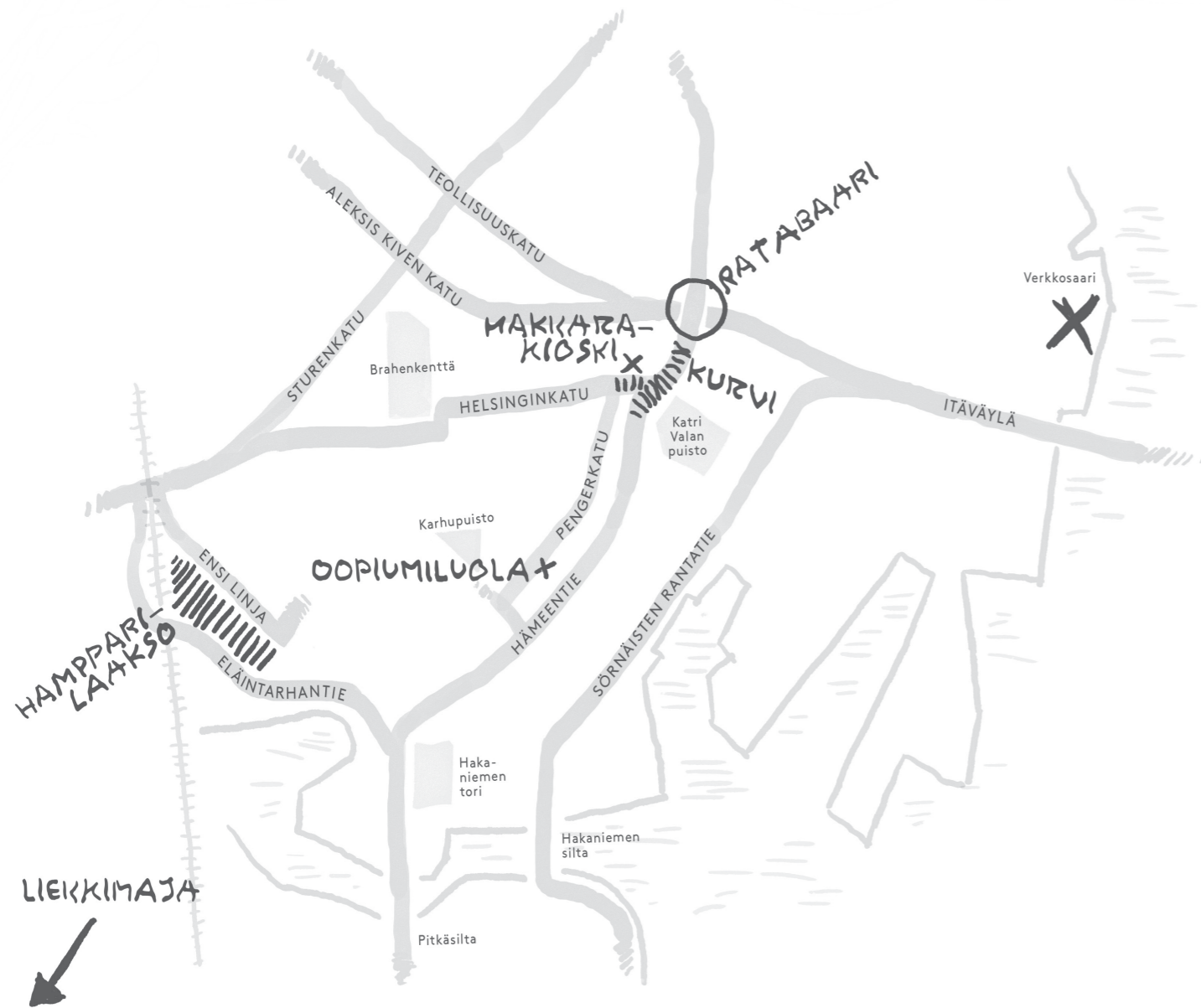
“We wanted to highlight a theme that is often overlooked. A theme that is timeless, but changes with the times.” Sauli Seppällä, exhibition producer

Helsinki City Museum organized an exhibition called “Helsinki Hobo” 15.11.2019–29.3.2020. The exhibition was based on the texts and drawings of Johan Knut Harju (1910-1976) who lived as a homeless person in Helsinki and wrote about life on the streets. Harju’s writings present a unique perspective to the life of a homeless person, and also give a voice to those whose stories are rarely heard.

During his time, after WWII, 11% of the Finnish population didn’t have a permanent home and especially the young men were at the risk of becoming homeless (Museum of Finnish Architecture, n.d.) Harju vividly describes the ruthless life of the homeless in his writings and also tells about the places where he and his companions stayed and spent time at (Map on the previous page). Many homeless spent their nights in holding cells or crowded night shelters, but some set up communities in somewhat more remote areas, such as Verkkosaari, “Pillar Hall” in Jätkäsaari and the “Hobo Valley” in Kallio. Overall, many areas Harju was writing about still remain rather rough and have a historical mark left from the times when homelessness was more common and visible in Helsinki.

Even though the times were hard and life was tough, there is a witty atmosphere in Harju’s writings. The street knowledge and experience was something you had to learn, and innovative ways how to use the urban space came to need. Also, a sense of humour was one of the surviving methods for Harju.

“Track Bar is a concept that one can feel with one’s hands and feet. Alcoholics look for shelter underneath the Hämeentie bridge. It offers that from rain and heat. It’s a pit into which the police wagons can’t drive and law enforcement won’t come toiling in for one varnish mess. It’s a harbour of peace.”



Picture 20: Map of the places that Harju mentioned in his writings.

3.3 The Areas of Visible Homelessness

The areas I included to the study for closer examination are the northeastern parts of the inner city of Helsinki; Kallio, Sörnäinen and Vallila, and the places of transit, such as railway- and metro stations. I selected these areas based on my observations and on the information I have received from the homeless while spending time at the homeless day centers. Besides these areas, I did walking tours around the city center amongst other locations to investigate how the Roma use the urban space.

3.3.1 Homeless Services

Finland traditionally has a wide non-profit and voluntary sector. Various organisations such as the Y-Foundation have long been involved in the work on homelessness. The role of the third sector has been irreplaceable (The Y-Foundation, 2017). In Helsinki, many of the organizations are located in the areas of Kallio, Vallila and Sörnäinen (see the map on the page 70). The presence of different NGOs providing homeless help often reflects the image of the neighbourhood and also creates NIMBY-attitude amongst the neighbours. The NGOs have tried to tackle this issue with communication and collaboration with the neighbourhood communities and with experts by experience method (The Y-Foundation, 2017).

Those without home often prefer to stay in the areas that are located close to the homeless services. The homeless day centers provide services that are vital for the homeless population, such as showers and restrooms, food, consultation, health services, activities, company and above all, shelter. Many of the NGO's follow the so called "low-threshold approach", which refers to the accessibility and prerequisites to obtaining a service, and within the substance use field, low threshold provision is often underpinned by principles of harm reduction (The Y-Foundation, 2017). For many, they are the only places where they can be without being judged or looked upon.



3.3.2 Kallio, Sörnäinen and Vallila

I moved to Helsinki in 2006 and my first flat was in Sörnäinen, the notorious neighbourhood in the north from the coastal centre of Helsinki. The streets were swarming with rats and it was never quiet because many cheap bars attracted a certain kind of a crowd that were shouting, singing and screaming day and night, but at least the rent was cheap. People always asked me “aren’t you scared to live there?” and in the beginning I actually was. But over time I got used to it and started recognizing the familiar faces of the sturdy beggars hanging around the shop next door and began to appreciate the care-free and relaxed lifestyle, as I saw it then. To be honest, I never felt more safe anywhere.

The areas of Kallio, Sörnäinen and Vallila have gone through a serious wave of gentrification but somehow remained some of that ‘notorious reputation’. Even though the rent prices have gone sky-high these neighbourhoods still remain as places where people don’t care so much or judge you based on your looks or mental stability.

Many of the organizations helping homeless people are located in these areas. There are some housing units, night shelters and day centers that provide multiple services for those in need. The bread line, which serves food for people with low-income twice a week, is also located in Kallio. In 2018, 5,400 people lined up every week to get their food supplies from there (Pietiläinen, 2018). The long line has awoken a lot of conversation for it is a visible evidence of the Finnish poverty.

The Helsinki Prison, also known as Sörnäinen Prison, is located in the district of Hermanni, close to Sörnäinen and Vallila. Approximately one third or more than one fourth of people released from prison are homeless. Also one third of people released on probation don’t have a permanent abode; the situation of people in other community sanctions is better. (Tampereen Yliopisto, 2018; Kaakinen, 2012).

3.3.3 Places of Transit

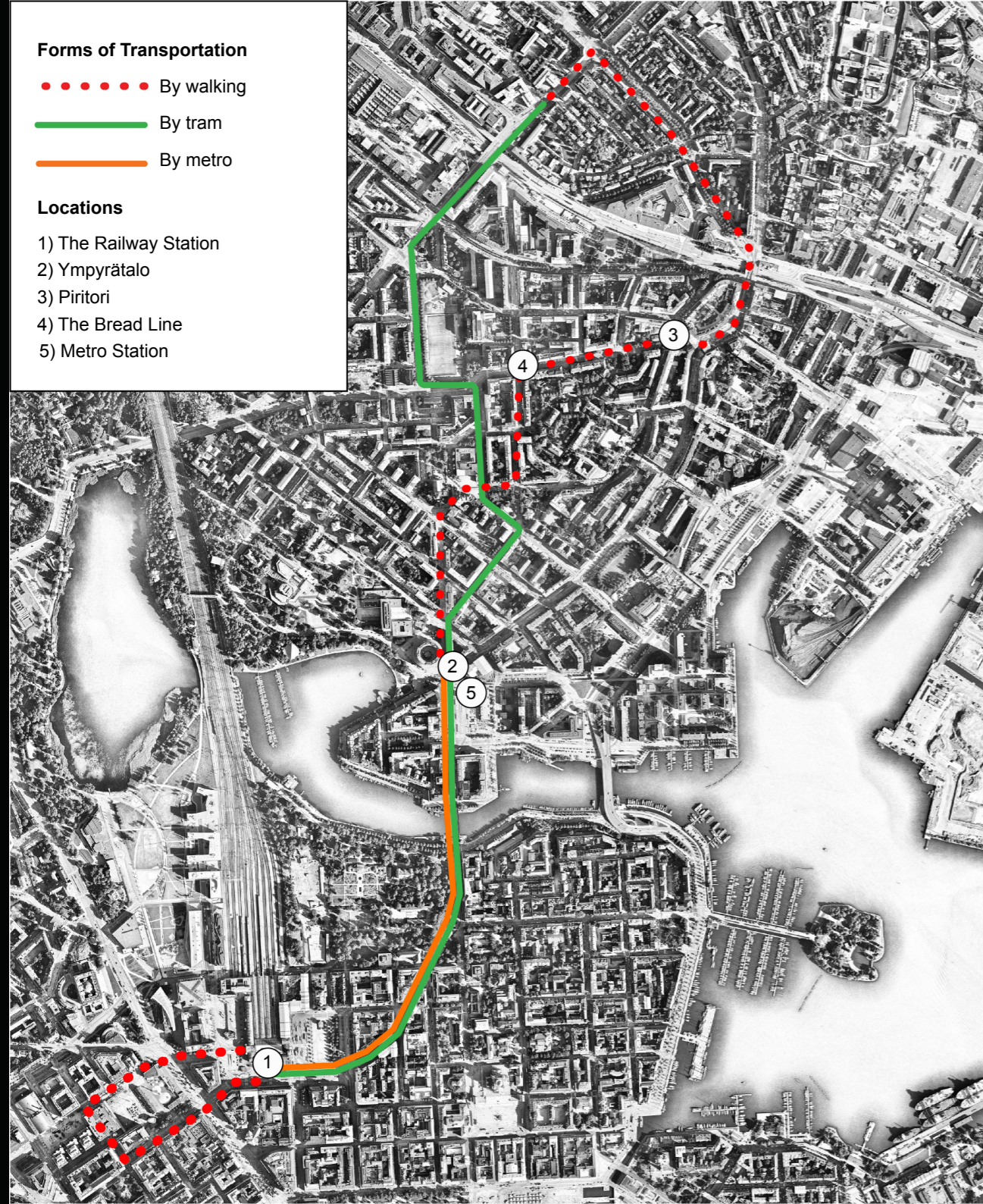
Railway stations, metro stations and bus terminals are places where homelessness is often visible. They are warm indoor areas that provide shelter and usually restrooms. The areas before the metro entrance are free to use and unlike cafes, restaurants or shops, you are not assumed to buy anything in order to be there. Some collect bottles from the trash bins to earn a bit of money. Constant traffic provides a possibility to blend in in order to stay out of sight. Staying out of sight is vital, since buildings of public transportation are heavily guarded in Helsinki.

Public transportation also offers a chance to sit down, kill time and rest for a moment. It is possible to ride a tram or a metro without buying a ticket, but there is a chance of getting caught by the ticket inspectors. Usually, when the inspectors catch a homeless person traveling in the public transportation without a ticket, they just ask them to leave, without giving them a ticket. Therefore, for the homeless, there is nothing to lose, except for being kicked out.

Bus- and tram stops have been used by the rough-sleepers, since they provide shelter from the rain and the bench is a more dry and warm place to sleep than the ground. Some of the Helsinki's bus-/tram stop benches have been changed into lean-on -rails, which prevent sleeping on them, but also sitting.



Picture 22: Hakaniemi metrostation



3.4 Field Research: Observations

“ It seems like even though there are seats, you’re not allowed to use them if you’re not a house-owning, tax-paying fully functioning part of the society. People come here to stop, but they seem to know that they are not welcome to stay”

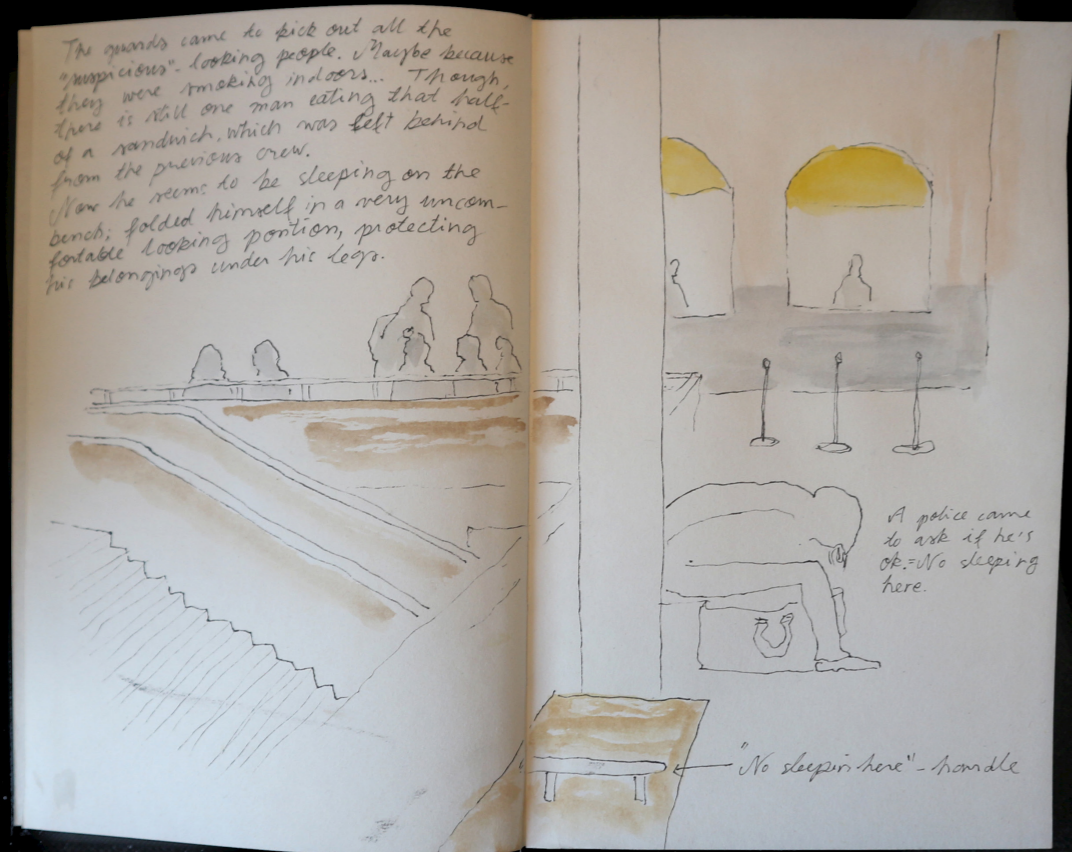
From my notebook on Tuesday, 7th of April 2020.

The first part of the field research was conducted by direct observation during the Spring 2020. I visited the same locations (see the map on the previous page) three times during March and April, each time from 08:00 to 18:00. I started my tour always from the railway station, where I also spent the most time, and then continued to the other locations and then returned to the starting point.

Because of the covid-19, all the day centers and homeless services providing food help or consulting, were closed during the investigation. Some of the night shelters were still open, but only during the night time. Also most of the public buildings, such as libraries, were closed. This meant that the homeless had to spend their days in those places that were still open: mainly railway- and metro stations. They had to be almost constantly on the move, since the guards didn’t let them stay in one place for long. The situation of Finnish homelessness looked suddenly much more severe when all those people, who did not have a home of their own, were now visible in the public.

One aspect that I realized, while doing the direct observation at the center of Helsinki, was since many commercial places; all the restaurants and most of the shops, were closed because of the pandemia, I was suddenly in a situation where I had no place to go. Therefore it was easier to relate to the situation that the homeless are facing every day. After spending the day at the different public spaces of the city I desperately wanted to wash my hands, but could not figure out a place to do so. The public toilets in the railway station seemed like I would get my hands dirtier if I decided to be brave enough to go there. I had a possibility to go home to wash myself and I was very grateful for that.

I spent most of the time at the main railway station, where I arrived early in the morning at 08:30. It was snowing every now and then and the temperature was just above 0 °C. I sat down in the waiting hall where I saw



Picture 24: A spread from my notebook: The waiting hall of the railway station.

some familiar faces from the day center I had been volunteering at. I had equipped myself with a notebook, pens, aquarells, camera, water, an emergency snack (chocolate) and some cigarettes to offer in order to approach people.

I felt throughout the time I spent at the station that I was not supposed to be there. I was not doing anything bad or illegal, merely sitting there while writing and drawing to my notebook. Also, observing people made me feel uncomfortable; the environment was completely different from the day centers where I was used to encounter these people. Some people came sitting next to me, not following the social distancing orders, to eat their snacks (half of a sandwich) while the bench was getting crowded with people carrying sleeping bags and the rest of their belongings in big bags. Some moments later the guards came to evict everybody, except two elderly ladies who obviously were not homeless. I tried to ask from the guards what is the policy of the public space and what was the reason behind the eviction, but I did not get a clear answer and got kicked out myself.

3.4.1 The Invisible Young Women

The people who had formed groups were mostly men, some among them were elderly women. I recognized one young woman, who I have met at the day center and noticed she was alone, staying away from the other people. I could relate to her need of solitude, since I also felt quite reserved around the groups and was not eager to approach them or talk to them. Starting a conversation with intoxicated men seems always a bit risky for a young woman. Especially if they notice that you are in such a vulnerable situation, that you do not have a place to go or any one to help you. I wanted to go and talk to the girl I had met earlier, but she disappeared before I managed to pack my belongings. The younger women were changing a spot often, moving around the place as if they did not want anybody to pay attention to them.

"The younger women were changing a spot often, moving around the place as if they didn't want anybody to pay attention to them."
 From my notebook on Tuesday, 24th of March 2020.



Picture 25: Sketches of the Roma beggars in Kamppi.

3.4.2 The Roma

The history of Roma people is marked by the persistence of discrimination, persecution and stigmatisation. These factors have a significant impact on living conditions of Roma, who are particularly affected by inadequate housing conditions – living in overcrowded accommodation, caravans or encampments - and by homelessness (FEANTSA, 2019a p. 1). In many European countries the Roma are outside of the basic services, such as education, healthcare or social security and are in a peripheral position in society already from childhood (Räsänen, 2019).

The beggars, who live in Helsinki and are mostly from Bulgaria and Romania (Räsänen, 2019), differ from other homeless people with their behaviour in the public space, because they want to be seen. They choose the places where they stay throughout the day based on the amount of people moving there. That is why the city center and major transit junctions, like Hakaniemi, have beggars sitting or facing down in a prayer position in the areas that are the most heavily trafficked by pedestrians in order to get some change from the bypassers.

I felt especially awkward sketching the beggars who were sitting or laying down in the ground, holding their paper cups in front of them. I felt like I was gaining something from their misery. Taking a picture would have been out of question. The weather was horrible during my tour of observation, it was very windy, cold and rainy. The beggars reacted to the sudden rain by going deeper to their clothes that already covered their faces so well, that I could only see the eyes. I dared to make a couple of quick sketches and moved on indoors to take cover from the freezing rain. The Roma people I've talked with told me some details about their lifestyle. I didn't have an opportunity to visit their camp, but what I learned from them is that they live in campervans at the outskirts of Helsinki, without running water or electricity and that it gets very cold during the winter. Their lifestyle is ruthless; surviving from day to another and living in inadequate dwellings, while many people see them as pests of the society and treat them in cruel ways.

PART 3: FINDINGS



Picture 26: The Railway Station

04 PLACES

In this chapter, I analyze five locations in Helsinki, which were included in the study; Railway Station, Metro stations, Vaasanpuistikko (also known as “Piritori”), Breadline square and Ympyrätalo (eng. “Round House”) of Hakaniemi.

4.1 The Railway Station

Painting on the previous page.

Helsinki Railway Station is right in the heart of the city center, connected with metro and tram lines. The building, designed by Eliel Saarinen in 1919, is one of Helsinki’s most famous attractions (Biografiakeskus, n.d.) The area is normally sprawling with tourists, but at the time of observation the country was closed due to the covid-19 pandemia. This brought up even clearer the amount of homeless people. Normally they disappear to the crowd, but now they formed the vast majority of people spending time at the station. While it was not raining, many were sitting outside in small groups and smoking cigarettes they bummed from by-passers. Police car was parked right in front of the main entrance the entire time I stayed there.

When the weather turned bad, people moved either under the canopy of the entrance, or indoors to the waiting hall. The waiting hall has a u-shaped bench, which has armrests every 1,5 meters suggesting that sleeping is not an option. One person tried to sleep on the bench, leaning on his legs, but in no time the policemen came to wake him up.

Waiting hall seemed to be a meeting point for people and many knew each other by name. People go there to warm up, mingle and kill time. It is one of the few public buildings that are still open in the city center during the state of emergency. The building provides things that people, who have no other place to go, need; warmth, restrooms and company. Some NGOs go there to give out food, breathing masks, clothes and other useful supplies to the station on daily bases; while I was there, some people were giving out sleeping bags. But then again, finding a place where it is alright to sleep might be almost impossible. I saw a man, who had positioned himself away from the main areas and he was sleeping while standing and leaning to the wall. The message is clear: If you don’t have a home, you’re not allowed to sleep.

4.2 The Breadline Square

Painting on the next page.

The breadline of Helsinki operates twice a week in Kallio, giving food supplies to low- or no income people. The line is sometimes very long and has awoken conversation about poverty in Finland (Haapanen, 2017). The place is in a junction of Helsinginkatu and Fleminginkatu – in the heart of Kallio. There is a grocery shop in one corner, a tram stop in another, a cafe, a second hand shop, pharmacy and a bar. The small square is quite ascetic. There are a couple of trees and two small kiosks; one that serves night snacks for the people going home from bars (which this area has plenty) and the other, a 1950's kiosk, which was recently repainted, but quickly after full of graffiti, which is rarely open. There are no seats or trash bins, yet people often loiter in the square. I had a chance to observe and paint this place from a restaurant right opposite to it, one rainy December evening. At that moment, there were only people walking by and nobody stayed or stopped for even a moment, although some people were waiting for the tram in the tram stop. The weather was ruthless and this square doesn't provide any shelter from rain.

To me this place has always represented the Finnish poverty. The combination of the grey buildings, the bread line and the grim atmosphere give it a feeling like it would be stuck in the 1990's.

4.3 Piritori

Painting on page 55.

As I explained in the chapter 1.5.3, Vaasanpuistikko is commonly known as "Piritori" (eng. "Amphetamine Market") among the locals. The name comes from drug dealing, which this place is notorious for. The square is in front of the entrance of Sörnäinen metro station and next to the traffic hub of Kurvi, so the area is heavily trafficked and therefore noisy. There are many services around the square; an atm, a kiosk, a grocery store, a pawn shop, a gym, an adult shop and a savate club. Besides these, two ngos providing homeless services, such as housing, are located around the square. One thing is completely missing: seats. While I was sketching the place I had to sit down on the ground on top of my backpack. This awoke curiosity in the people who were spending time there and some came to ask what I was doing and to bum a cigarette. Most of the people, gathered in small groups, were standing nearby the grocery store and a group of three had sat down next to the metro's ventilation structure in the middle of the



Picture 27: The Bread Line



square. A police car was parked near to the metro entrance. The colorful painting on the ground, an attempt to make the square more approachable, had faded away and somehow made the place look sad and forgotten.

4.4 Ympyrätalo (The Round House)

Painting on the previous page.

I lived many years next to this place, so I got quite familiar with the dynamics of the area. I visited the grocery shop in Ympyrätalo almost on a daily basis and spent time in the cafe opposite to it, watching the stream of people float through and some groups spending time in front of the building.

Ympyrätalo (built in 1968) is a round shaped building in Hakaniemi, with multiple functions. The street level has a big grocery store, Alko (alcohol shop), a restaurant and a pharmacy. At the shop's entrance there are some slot machines, which are usually very popular, but during the pandemia they were out of order. Outside of the building there is a construction with a canopy, that used to be a "drive-in bank" but it has been abandoned since the 1970's. Next to it there is a triangle-shaped lawn which is surrounded with a knee-high wall that can be used as a bench. Often, when the weather allows, people sit on it in small groups. Closer to the shop entrance there is usually a Roma beggar, who either sits by the entrance or goes across the street next to the tram stop. Sometimes, when I have been on my way to return bottles to the shop, the Roma beggar has asked me if she can take the bottles and earn a couple of euros with them. The bottle recycling point might play somewhat of a role when it comes to evaluating why this place is popular amongst the homeless. Collecting bottles is a way of earning some money while being on the move. All the grocery stores have a bottle recycling system, but sometimes they are slow or not working well. People who have collected bottles for some time usually have a big amount of them to recycle, therefore places with well-functioning recycling machines are valued. Besides this, Hakaniemi as a transit area, connected with major bus lines, trams and metro, has many people passing by throughout the day, which is a possibility to earn money for the Roma by begging.

The people sitting on the stone wall are often drinking and being loud. In my experience, it is always windy in this particular place and perhaps for that nobody seems to stay there for very long. People often go to the nearby park, by the shore, if the weather allows. The park has a public toilet that can be used free of charge, where some, who have no place to go, even sleep sometimes.

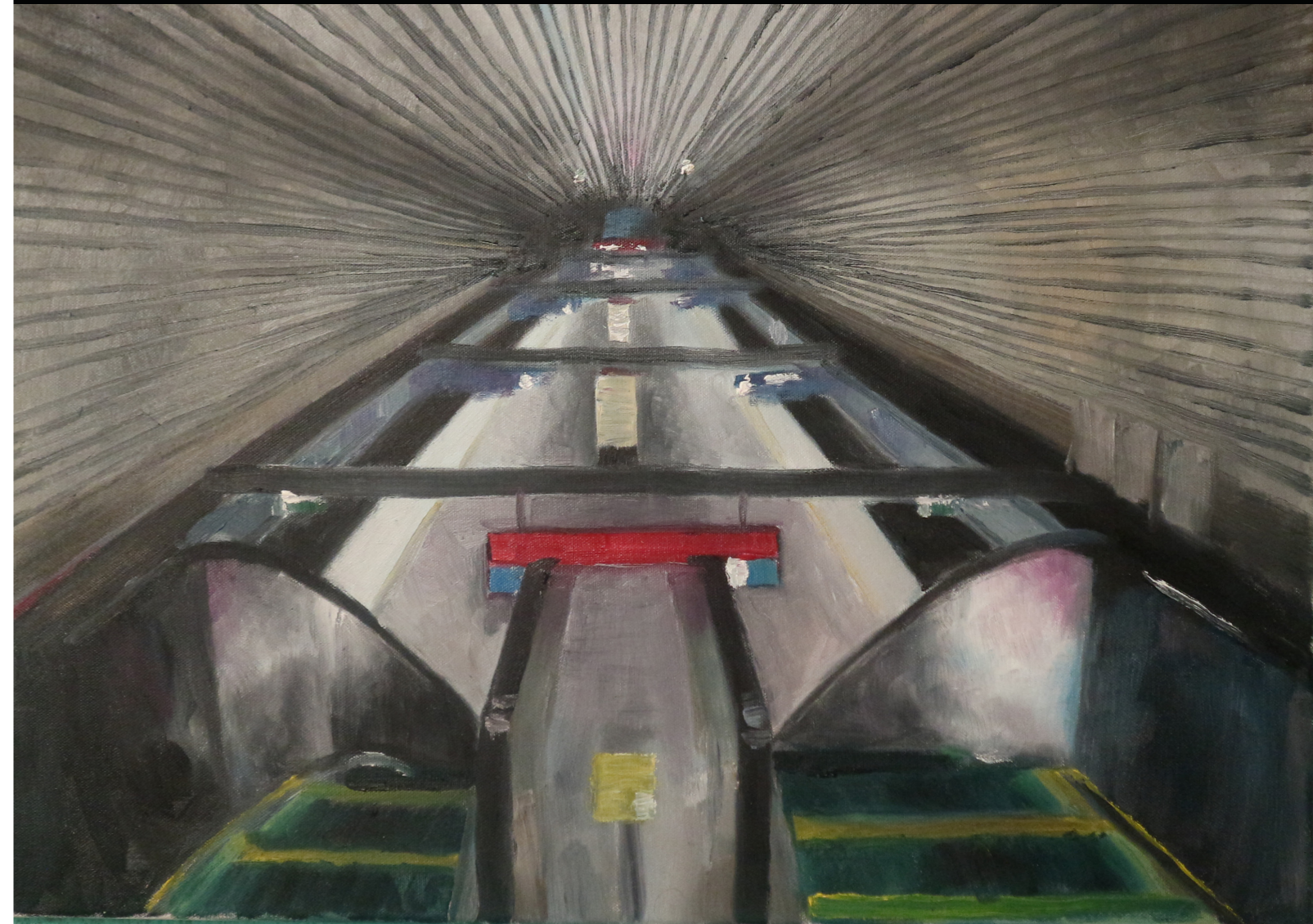
4.5 Metro Stations

Painting on the next page.

Transit areas have been known as places where homeless people spend time, like diagnosed in chapter 3.3.3. For this study, I analyzed three big metro stations of Helsinki; Railway Station's metro station, Hakaniemi station and Sörnäinen station. The painting is from the Hakaniemi station.

Metro stations usually have two parts; the entrance area, where there might be some shops, kiosks or cafes and the transit area after the escalators, where you are supposed to have a ticket when you enter. Some of the metro stations have public toilets, which are often in an inadequate shape. The stations provide shelter, but the indoor space is not quite warm. Both the metro traffic and the people moving keep the air flowing. All of the stations have seats, but except for Railway Station, only on the platform. The guards are often offer-efficient in the station buildings and in the metros. They look for people who are not the basic commuters and roughly wake up the ones that are trying to sleep. This provokes fear and sometimes anger, creating a tense atmosphere to an already distressing environment.

The metro stations of Hakaniemi and Railway station were opened the same year in 1982 and Sörnäinen metro station followed the year 1984 (Finnish Tramway Society, n.d.). The 1980's style, supported with the color scape, is still vividly visible in all three stations mentioned. It feels like the time has stopped in this forever seething, busy and cold cave.



Picture 29: Hakaniemi Metro Station



05 FACES

This chapter focuses on the different homeless people, roughly divided into four groups: ex-convicts, the Roma, elderly men and young women. I analyze these groups utilizing the portraits I have painted of them and using the information I have gained through CBPR, direct observation and literature review.

5.1 Ex-Convict

In Finland, approximately one thousand people released from prison annually end up being homeless and in Helsinki the amount is one third of the ex-convicts. About every third prisoner, every fourth in community sanctions and over one tenth of prisoners in open institutions lack everyday life skills (Kaakinen, 2012).

If the ex-convicts don't have a home, it's very difficult to start working or studying. This can lead into further criminal activity and interrupt the rehabilitation that was initiated in the prison. Therefore, the ideal situation for the convicts, after serving their prison time, would be to have a home waiting for them. This awakens mixed feelings because ex-convicts are often seen as the scum of the society and thought of "they get what they deserve". Giving an apartment to an ex-convict could be considered "unfair".

The man in the painting plays a confident role. He is eager to approach and to start a conversation, asking me about my marital status. His daily routines include visiting the day center where he can get a cup of coffee and some buns to eat, then he goes around the nearby areas, sometimes seeing his friends and spending time in their apartments, where he also sleeps if possible. He does not like to spend time in the public spaces because he feels like he's not welcome there and because other people judge him.

5.2 The Roma Lady

I spent time with the Roma ladies outside of the homeless services, because I never saw them there. I already knew some of them, who were often stationed near my house. During the summer time they collect bottles from the parks of Kallio, where young people spend time, producing valuable empty cans. I have occasionally had conversations with some of these women, when they have asked me for money or cigarettes or when I have assisted them to do grocery shopping. While spending time with them It

has become clear how people find them suspicious and do not trust them. When we were in a second hand shop finding a blanket for them, the sales person was following us all the time until I said I am with them. Some people even get hostile around the Roma; many of the women I chatted with had been kicked or spit on.

“If I had some other option to earn money than begging, I would do it. I collect bottles whenever I can, but after summer it’s almost impossible to live with it. I feel ashamed when I am begging in the streets. In order to get money I have to be there where the people are and many of them treat us like dogs.”

The Helsinki Deaconess Institute offers services for the traveller population. In addition to tending to everyday matters, they provide social service and health care support for our clients. But for many, the lack of trust towards society prevents them for seeking help from the associations providing homeless services.

The woman I painted is an elderly lady, who does not speak English. She often has her daughters with her, who have helped me to communicate with her. Her life has been moving from a place to another for the last few decades. Before coming to Finland she and her family lived in Sweden. Family is the most important thing for her and from the money she gets with begging, she sends some to Romania for the family members, who remained there and live in poverty. She rather stays begging in the Kallio area than goes to the city center, because the people are friendlier and give more money. For the night time she returns to the campervan camp, that they have in the outskirts of Helsinki.

Without access to other forms of housing, some Roma have to build houses or makeshift accommodation without permission, often on public or private land they do not own. Lack of security of tenure is a particularly acute problem for Roma communities living in informal settlements or in rented accommodation. Furthermore, Roma housing areas often suffer from poor access to public services, employment and schools, and lack adequate access to public utilities such as water, electricity or gas (FEANTSA, 2019a.)

5.3 Eldery Man

Painting on the page 11. This man is a storyteller. He has lived a vivid life



and spent short periods of time in the prison. He has a long history of being homeless and has accepted his role in society. In his opinion, the poor (him included) deserve to be poor, because they have failed in life. When he hears that I study architecture he asks “What is an architecture student like you doing with losers like us?” He processes his experiences with humour, emphasizing the vagabond lifestyle and behaving in an over-confident way. He prefers to stay in the districts of Vallila and Sörnäinen and talk with like-minded people. He says he does not care what the people think about him and his behaviour in the public spaces is sometimes almost theatrical. When he was younger, he stayed wherever he could; sometimes living in small communities that had built dwellings for themselves and sometimes in the crowded night shelters – if he was sober enough to get in. Today he is living in a supported housing unit which was offered to him via an ngo that is supported by the Housing First programme.

5.4 Young Woman

The number of homeless women has decreased in recent years, but the proportion of homeless women has increased (ARA, 2020). The real number is expected to be much bigger, since many women do not seek any help and are often living with the people who abuse them to avoid ending up on the streets. Those who experience homelessness are often at risk of being exposed to abuse and violence more than homeless men. Many homeless services are designed for men and do not respond to the special needs of women experiencing homelessness.

“It was shameful to sleep in the metro or to eat scraps from the dumpster. It was scary to see how somebody gets beaten-up, and to wonder if she would survive that. It was disgusting to offer your own body for someone to abuse, only to get a place to sleep for a night. In October it gets cold on the streets if you don’t have a place to go..”

The girl in the painting is aware and has her guard on. In public spaces she avoids other people and tries not to be seen. She still wants to stay in the public spaces and in the crowds, in order to stay safe. Keeping on the move is sometimes the best solution for her not to be noticed by the others. Even in the day center she does not want to draw any attention to herself and rather stays quiet reading a magazine. There is now a recently opened day center in Helsinki, specialized on women’s needs, which is a relief for this girl. Being around intimidating, often intoxicated men is scary and sometimes dangerous.



06 RESULTS

The data I collected and further analyzed gave the following results:

- 1) The public space is not either equal, open nor democratic to all social groups
- 2) The factors that make the public space unequal or less-approachable for homeless people are: public space is often linked to the commercial space and therefore favours those who have a possibility to consume; public space is controlled by public policy, which unlike public order act, doesn't allow loitering; the mental identity of a place (i. e. In which type of a neighbourhood the place is) affects on how acceptable or tolerated one feels like.
- 3) Homeless people from different backgrounds experience and use the public space in different ways: the men who have experienced homelessness often play a confident role in the public, however avoiding places outside their comfort-zone, which are the areas with visible homelessness; the young women try to remain unseen and safe by moving around and avoiding to be noticed. The public space for them is both a threat (where people can spot the vulnerability of them not having a home) and a possibility for staying safe (with the surveillance and the crowd noticing if something bad happens); the Roma beggars want to be seen in order to get money from the by-passers. They also avoid the common homeless services and remain in their own communities.
- 4) Public space has a powerful role in affecting the way we see and therefore treat people around us. Therefore:
- 5) Urban planning instruments can contribute in the fight against homelessness.
- 5) The political will to react on issues, such as homelessness, depends on how the public is portrayed: If the homeless are denied access to public space, it reflects on the decision-making process.

07 DISCUSSION

7.1 The Power to the Public Space

The identity of a place affects communities and individuals and vice versa. Many people I have talked with, who have experienced homelessness, tend to feel shame and have a feeling of not deserving anything good. This feeling reflects the decisions they make about where to spend time and where to stay.

The visible homelessness in central Helsinki is mostly located in areas that have homeless services, such as Kallio, Sörnäinen and Vallila. These areas also have a history of homelessness and poverty, and the overall mentality is more accepting towards different social groups. The near presence of the Helsinki Prison also affects on the numbers of street homeless, because one third of the released prisoners do not have a home to go to. Besides these aforementioned districts, the places of transit are commonly used by the homeless. They are free to enter and offer shelter, often restrooms and sometimes seats. Regardless about the fact that they are public spaces, the policy is often suggesting that they are not completely inclusive; the benches might have rails that make sleeping impossible and the guards remove people if they don't have a good reason to be there.

Nevertheless, the homeless population can not fully be analyzed as a one big group, because the life situations, backgrounds and factors such as age, gender and ethnicity affect how the public space is used and experienced. When we divide the homeless to sub-categories, it is easier to spot converging manners. The big behavioural differences were between men, young women and those, who get their living by begging – in this case – the Roma.

The homeless men are playing confident and often staying in groups when in public spaces. They tend to be loud, shameless and even intimidating. I have to admit, that even though I have experience in working with the homeless, substance abusers and mentally challenged, I felt nervous while doing the observations for the research, therefore I can relate to those, who are actively afraid of the homeless. Especially the men usually reflect the way they see themselves to the areas around them and prefer places that are less maintained or “low quality”. The young women, instead, prefer to be unnoticed, but remain in the crowded, controlled public spaces, in order to stay safe. Women are often ignored in homelessness services because homelessness is regarded as a phenomenon only affecting men (FEANT-

SA, 2016) but now there is a homeless day center in Helsinki, specialized on women's needs. The Roma have a different approach to the public spaces, because many of them earn their living by begging. Thus, it is necessary to be seen; mainly in the street corners, in front of the shopping centers and overall in places with crowds.

For all of the above-mentioned it is common to be discriminated in public space. If not directly (i.e. other people avoiding, judging, telling to go away) then indirectly, with exclusionary spaces, hostile architecture and commercial public space that favors consumers.

For the homeless people public space – and especially public buildings – are often the only spaces where they can be. When you do not have a home nor can not afford to stay in the places that require consuming, the public realm becomes the only reality that is left, and the difference between private and public stops existing.

Open and democratic public spaces are an asset to achieve socially inclusive cities, recognized as such in academic and policy circles.
(Sezer, 2020)

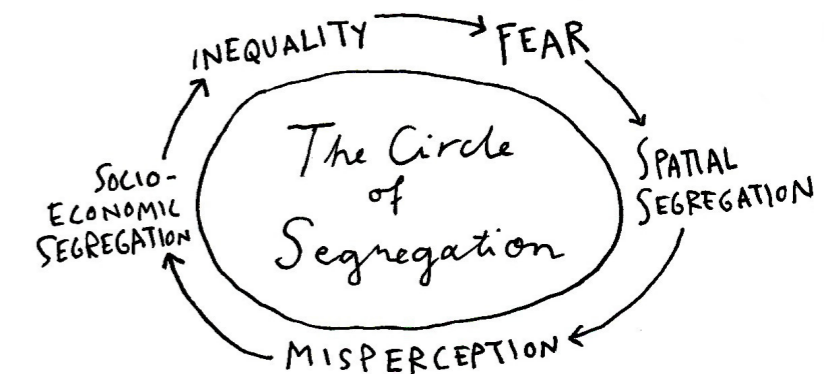


Figure 1. The circle of segregation

7.2 The Right to the Public Space

In this study, I discovered that the policy and right to the public space don't actualize for homeless people. It is evident that public space is not equal for all user groups, especially for the homeless. Three main factors that make public space less approachable or open for homeless people are: 1) public spaces are rarely non-commercial, therefore excluding those, who can not consume. 2) The homeless are often evicted from public spaces even though the public order act does not support it. 3) Instruments of exclusion are implemented to the public space, i. e. hostile architecture.

Market-oriented urban growth has transformed public spaces as centres of urban leisure and consumption, and they are increasingly designed and geared to attract tourists and higher-income groups, leading to trends toward the commodification of urban development (Madanipour, 2019; Sezer, 2019). This suggests that the presence of non-consumers is not wanted and contributes to the erosion of key features of democratic public spaces. There are also difficulties to define who can use the public space and in what way. The public order act gives a guideline to actions that are

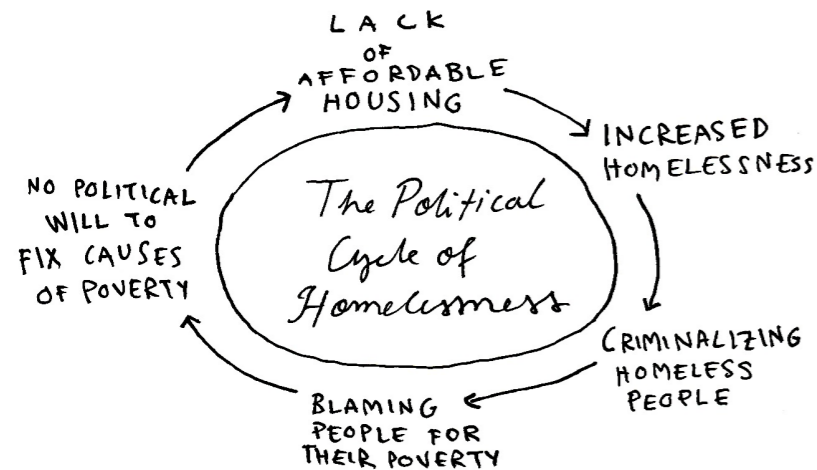


Figure 2. The political cycle of homelessness

accepted and forbidden in the public space, but the policy does not always follow them. As noted in the chapter 1.9.3, an activity that does not follow the main function of the public space is not allowed, or requires an official permission.

Public spaces reveal the true identity of the city by showing the diversity and needs of the citydwellers. If a group, like the homeless, is excluded by using the tools of exclusion (i.e. hostile architecture), public space becomes dishonest and deceptive.

Built-in attitudes towards different social groups are often adopted from childhood and get even stronger when there is no connection to such groups (Killen & Levy, 2010). The lack of social encounters is often caused by the structure of our societies and cities (Al-Sabouni, 2016). Spatial segregation is strongly linked with socio-economic segregation and links further on into poverty and to homelessness. Processes of polarisation and the associated atomisation of communities drive a heightened fear of the others (strangers), and a further withdrawal of those with choice from public space (Carmona et al., 2008). The circle of segregation is a spiraling phenomenon that leads into further segregation and fear (see Figure 1, p. 96). This, in it's part, affects the political decision making, design and further to lack of housing and increased homelessness (see Figure 2, p. 97).

“As cities have grown and diversity and inequality intensified (OECD, 2008), a fragmented social geography has emerged in which the desire for and the possibility of copresence by different groups has receded.”
(Madanipour, 2016)

7.3 The Policy to the Public Space

Public spaces offer the chance of strengthening coexistence and facilitating dialogue by bringing strangers together. They have a potential/power to reduce segregation by helping to recognize the mere existence of the others and further to increase the acceptance and tolerance towards them. Ali Madanipour suggests that “Public space can make considerable contributions to tolerance and pluralism by allowing different individuals and groups to become aware of themselves and others, and thrive together in the same place, rather than live in separation and alienation from one another.” (Madanipour, 2016, p. 49) The challenge is to develop a peaceful arena of coexistence for the diverse populations of the modern cities.

“Key features of democratic public spaces include the existence of diverse voices and users; the participation and appropriation of public space by the users; and the encouragement of encounters and civility.” (Sezer, 2020).

There are urban planning instruments that can contribute in the fight against segregation and furthermore homelessness. Such tools include: equality as a basis of planning; inclusionary zoning and participatory planning. The challenge of participatory planning is to include the whole spectrum of people to the process of development. One approach is to utilize the experts by experience, as stated in the chapter X. Urban activism can potentially work as a vanguard for urban planning in developing non-commercial and consequently more equal public spaces. Urban activism has often been used as a statement against privatization of the public space with the originally marxist paradigm “right to the city”.

Exclusionary methods, such as hostile architecture, should be avoided in order to develop democratic and inclusive public spaces. They can be as obscure as a handrail in a park bench or as obvious as spikes under the bridge, but the message is the same: You are not welcome here.

7.4 The Limitations of the Research

The research methods that I used covered qualitative methods of CBPR, art-based research and direct observation methods. With the data gained with these methods, I could conduct conclusions that corresponded with the literature review and further helped to gain information that could not have been achieved with other methods. The strength of the CBPR combined with the art-based research in this case was that the methods helped to create trust between the different participants, thus facilitating the collecting of the honest data.

Nonetheless, CBPR has been criticized as “do-it-yourself ethnography” and accused for conferring the illusion of increased understanding when in fact no such understanding has been achieved. (Spinuzzi, 2005). However, the focus of this study was to analyze public spaces with the homeless perspective, using the chosen methods. The results might have been more accurate, if other methods, such as constructed interviews, surveys or mapping tools were used. Therefore, for further investigation it would be useful to gather qualitative data to get a wider understanding about the homeless population’s needs in urban space.

08 CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to investigate and analyze the public space and the power relations in it from a not so often used perspective of the homeless people. The philosophy it was leaning to was to emphasize the importance of human-centered, empathetic and equal design approach in order to be able to develop sustainable and democratic environments. The growing numbers of privatized public spaces might not appear for those who are not dependent on the shelters and other vital amenities that non-commercial public spaces offer. Therefore, I found it necessary to examine the nature of the public space and to investigate how urban planning tools could be used to prevent and solve homelessness.

Besides the literature review, which was especially utilized for the theory part of the study, qualitative methods were used to gather the data necessary for the further research. The latter part of the study was implemented by using the mixed qualitative methods of community-based participatory research, art-based research and observational study. These methods were especially useful in the circumstances where the study was conducted and helped to create the much needed trust between the participants, therefore opening possibilities for genuine dialogue and thus, information. The data that was gathered via these methods, was analysed and compared to the existing research and literature from the same field. The nature of the public space and the importance of it as a part of a democratic process emerged clearly from the study results. It was also evident that the public space does not follow its purpose as being a place that is open and welcome for all. In other words, the homeless are not welcome to stay in the public space, although the public realm is the only place they can exist. The excluding factors are both structural and personal, reflecting from the insecurity that homelessness undeniably creates. Since public space has such a great power and an ability to exclude and create segregation, it therefore can be used to gain the opposite outcomes. By recognizing the possible threats and by acting on eliminating them, public space can make considerable contributions to tolerance and pluralism. Urban planners already have tools in their use, which we have discussed in the study, which can help to develop more equal and democratic environments.

I argue, that public space should be open and to include the whole variety of people, the homeless included. Excluding a group of people, such as the homeless, out from the public results both as a fear to the other and as a biased worldview. "Out of eyes, out of mind" - mentality corrupts our comprehension of reality and further affects our [political] decision making.

The study I conducted gives a moderate picture about how the homeless in Helsinki experience and use the public space, but the topic could be more closely examined, perhaps by using different methods, such as interviews, surveys and mapping tools. There is also room for more detailed site analysis, in order to gain a better understanding about all the factors that affect the exclusiveness /inclusiveness of the public space.

I would strongly encourage further research on this subject – not only to gain knowledge about the public space for further developing – but also to learn to understand the people, who we so often ignore.

Ultimately, I can only hope that this thesis would provoke discussion and remind planners to open their eyes to see also those, who are often invisible.

Acknowledgement

Going through this whole process, which included reading, writing, research, painting and getting known and learning from new people, was an overwhelming experience, which I couldn't have accomplished without the help of some special people. I would humbly wish to thank my teachers from Aalto University and my supervisor, professor Kimmo Lapintie for guiding me through and giving me the knowledge and inspiration for my career and life.

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Picture 9. Kemppainen, M. (2019). *Slightly Hostile Architecture* [Photograph].

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