

Finding Any Place? Immigrants in City Planning and City Plans: Case Suvela

Abstract:

What kind of urban places are needed in ethnically segregated housing areas to strengthen immigrants' integration in a new society? How could immigrants' participation in city planning be increased in order to find this out? Immigrant women living in Suvela housing area show us the way in this feminist and ethnographic case study of participatory action research. The focus of the study is in two phenomena: the interactive relationship between immigrants and city planning and immigrants and the built environment. Perceptions, interpretations and activities in both of them are studied through different qualitative and participatory research methods. The research process is thus both a city planning process and a learning and integration process at the same time. The paper shows how multiculturalism should be seen as a test for the whole city planning system. Multiculturalism requires that city planners get on their feet and dive in the life spheres of the people they plan for and that the immigrants mobilize themselves so that their hidden knowledge gets heard in the democratic process of city planning. In this reciprocal communication process emphasis should be laid on empathic methods: city planning 'probes'. It is not just immigrants' own culture that affects the way immigrants see their environment and comprehend their needs but also the phase of integration process they are in. Even though there was a vast heterogeneity among immigrant women in this case study, their needs did not seem that different from the native citizens. Therefore, it is what we have in common that successful integration can be built on.

Keywords: participatory action research – immigrant women – participatory city planning methods – urban places

INTRODUCTION

About concepts and standpoints

What participatory city planning methods should a city planner use in order to increase immigrants' participation in city planning process and to get relevant information about their needs? What kind of urban places should be created in multicultural housing areas in immigrants' point of view? The aim of this paper is two-sided: on one hand to help a city planner to evaluate participatory city planning methods in a multicultural city planning process and on the other hand to define some characteristics of desirable urban places in multicultural housing areas. Since the research is still going on, the answers presented in this paper are only preliminary.

The mindset behind the research has been the following: Even if many participatory city planning methods may function satisfyingly despite the cultural differences and language barriers between the city planner and participants with a foreign background, some of them must function better than the others. If the city planner chooses a method that works the best possible way in a multicultural city planning process, the outcome will be more informative for the city planner. Participation in the city planning process in itself can also help immigrants in their integration process. Furthermore, if the city planner then creates on the basis of that information such urban places that meet the needs of people with a foreign background, their integration process in the new society can become easier again.

Words 'immigrants' and 'people with a foreign background' mean technically different things. Therefore it is important to look at the central concept more closely. The Finnish word 'maahanmuuttaja' is often used both in everyday and official language to cover all foreigners who live in Finland despite their reason of immigration. Because it is hard to translate it in English, I use the word 'immigrant' in this paper instead. Here it is a synonym of five different population groups: 1) traditional immigrants who live abroad because of their work, 2) refugees who live abroad because of persecution in their home country or fear for it on the basis of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, 3) people who live abroad because of humanitarian reasons (e.g. family reunions), 4) people who live abroad because of an international marriage and 5) people who live abroad because of their studies. Even if the word 'immigrant' (as well as 'maahanmuuttaja') has got a lot of negative connotations in public recently, I use it here as a neutral word which it has originally also been. Moreover, although it is a good question to ask when an immigrant stops being an immigrant, I do not editorialise it in this paper. I use the concept 'immigrant' here simply to mean all those people who have emigrated from their home country and immigrated in a foreign country, and who thus represent different cultures compared with the native citizens.

Another central word in this paper is 'participatory' which leads us to the genre, field and framework of the research presented in this paper: the participatory action research (PAR), participatory urban planning and feminist framework.

The research described here is an example of participatory action research (PAR), where the researcher explores the subject by altering it through certain experiments together with the informants of the research. PAR has often a moral or normative aspect when trying to change the world to some desired direction, and so does this research too. This is often the case also in multicultural planning in general. Already the beginning of the paper stated between the lines what is considered as desired action and what the desired consequences of this action are, i.e. where this research is aiming at and why:

- it is good that immigrants participate in city planning so that they can express their needs to the city planner
- it is good that their needs are taken care of so that they can get integrated in the new society.

If we then turn these statements on the other way round, we get the issues that are seen as problems in this research:

- (it is bad that) immigrants do not participate in city planning
- (it is bad that) immigrants' needs are not paid attention to in city planning.

Again, there are two presumptions behind these moral arguments:

- immigrants communicate in a different way compared with the city planner
- immigrants' needs are different from the native citizens.

The case study presented later in this paper shows if these presumptions are true, if the previously mentioned problems do exist and if so, how they have been tackled through the means of participatory action research.

This PAR case study falls within the field of participatory urban planning. Because the setting of the case study is in a city, I shall use the concept 'participatory city planning' further on in this paper. It is a conscious choice to use the term 'participatory' instead of e.g. 'collaborative' or 'communicative' as well, since I look at the cast in the planning process quite openly from the viewpoint of a city planner. Having a professional background in city planning praxis at the municipal sector, I know from my own experience what a city planner can often offer for citizens is unfortunately only a minimum amount of participation to fulfil the requirements of the legislation. What disturbs me most as a city planner in the world of research is that there does not seem to exist tight budgets, decreasing amount of employees or shortening timetables to hinder reaching the ideals of participation set by the research. In real life, however, there is usually no time or money for constant negotiations or numerous altering plans let alone shared decision making which leads to bigger or smaller compromises for all parts instead. Moreover, single citizens are by no means the only group entitled to take part in the planning process. There are also a good number of state officials, different national, regional and municipal sector officials as well as local societies, entrepreneurs and land owners who

have the same legislative right to be heard in the city planning process, which makes the urge for compromises is even more justified. Therefore, while Arnstein saw citizen participation also in those planning situations where the citizens are in control of the whole planning process (Arnstein 1969), I see it only there where the power relation is clearly for the good of the planner, that is: where the planner is in charge and citizens (only) participate. As for the research at hands, this means that the city planner leads the city planning process but interacts with the immigrants in all the different phases of the city planning process – in data gathering, actual planning and evaluation – as well as makes most of the actual planning decisions but again on the basis of the information received from the immigrants. All in all, if the PAR sets the ideals for this research, participatory planning seen from the realities of the planning practice sets the limits for it.

The same logic applies also for the feminist framework of this research. The reason for this choice does not lie only in the fact that immigrant women are informants of this research but also in the chosen viewpoint of the city planner. Feminism does seek 'those with partial sight and limited voice' (Haran 1988, p. 590) whom immigrant women also stand for. However, feminism also claims that objectivity exists in situated knowledges and that positioning oneself implies responsibility for the practices (Haran 1988, p. 583, 587). As I see it, feminism is not necessarily about making the existing power relations to disappear. Firstly, all the human relations are power relations in the sense that our actions always have an influence on others. Secondly, someone must always make the decisions – also the nasty ones – anyway. What feminism is about, however, is making the existing power relations visible, so that the decisions of those who have the power to make them can be questioned when necessary by those who do not have the same power. This is why there is a downright demand of making the standpoint of this research, the viewpoint of a city planner, clear enough instead of hiding the researcher's subject away. It means that if the participatory planning led by the city planner defines the content of the research, feminist framework giving voice to the more powerless immigrants as well as admitting the limits of the city planner's knowledge and responsibility for the actions, criticizes it.

The backbone of this research thus consists of the genre of PAR, the field of participatory planning and the feminist framework. Before we go to the actual case study, we still have to look at the relevant literature about the research subjects: the participatory city planning methods and urban places in a multicultural context.

About literature

The time period, which has most to offer for us in Finland, is from the year 2000 on, when participatory city planning has become the mainstream also in praxis. The reason for this was the Land Use and Building Act which became valid the year 2000. Already the Act on Environmental Impact Assessment Procedure from the year 1994 required more participation from planning the built environment than before, and its principles were then adopted also in the Land Use and Building Act. The Land Use and Building Act included a requirement for a special participation and assessment scheme for regional plans, joint municipal plans, local master plans and local detailed plans for the first time in the Finnish legislation history (§ 63). The purpose of the scheme is to give the interested parties an opportunity to obtain information on the principles of the planning and of the participation and assessment procedures. The scheme has to be done and delivered to the interested parties already at the beginning of the city planning process so that they have a real chance to influence the whole planning process. This is based on a broader requirement that plans must be prepared in interaction with such persons and bodies on whose circumstances or benefits the plan may have substantial impact (§ 6). The spectrum of civic advocacy thus extended to cover all the phases of the city planning process in the new law. However, the focus was now set at the beginning where most of the decisions of the planning process are made instead of the phases where something is already drawn up in a more finalized form. The Land Use and Building Act obliges also that plans must be founded on sufficient studies and reports. These include an assessment of the environmental impact of implementing the plan, including socio-economic, social, cultural and other impacts (§ 9), which has the most obvious roots in the Act on Environmental Impact Assessment Procedure. Even though the reasons behind the rise of

communicative planning are deeper in the past than in the legislation (Puustinen 2006, p. 311), the actual communicative turn in city planning practise lies in the compelling force of the Land Use and Building Act.

The new law meant increased research, development and appliance of participatory city planning in Finland (e.g. Staffans 2004, Staffans and Väyrynen ed. 2009, Horelli ed. 2013). However, there is very little participatory action research done in the field of participatory city planning, even less in a multicultural environment and nothing within the feminist framework. The most upfront multicultural PAR project was OurCity which was led during 2011-2013. In this World Design Capital -project a multicultural team of architects and students of architecture and geography made an alternative master plan for a multicultural suburb Meri-Rastila in eastern Helsinki with the help of i.a. some immigrant residents to compete with the official plan of the city but lost after a good fight (Salgado and Galanakis 2014, Fuad-Luke 2012). Smaller PAR projects in a multicultural environment or attempts towards it have been presented mainly on one hand in diploma works (Rinkinen 2004, Maununaho 2006, Autio 2015) and on the other hand in different urban regeneration research projects usually at the college level and only in social sciences (Fast, Kröger and Fashizumi 2010), where PAR in itself seems to fit better because of the long tradition of hands-on teaching and research. Again, PAR may not feel so natural in the Finnish environment, where existing authorities are highly obeyed and therefore not easily challenged. Furthermore, feminist city planning is still such an unknown concept in Finland even in general (Helsingin sanomat 2015), so that it is no wonder that PAR projects about participatory city planning in a multicultural environment within feminist framework are totally absent in Finland so far.

If we then look more closely at the actual research subjects of this paper, participatory city planning methods and urban places in a multicultural context, the situation in the research is the same. After the Land Use and Building Act and the so-called communicative turn in city planning praxis the research and development of participatory city planning methods in Finland has concentrated on technical solutions like soft-GIS and e-planning, which are based on indirect interaction between the planner and the participant and which still often require skills of Finnish (e.g. Horelli and Kaaja 2002, Kaaja and Horelli 2004, Kahila and Kyttä 2009, Kyttä 2011a and 2011b, Horelli and Wallin 2013, Botero 2013, Saad-Sulonen 2014). In praxis the new participatory planning methods have come mainly just to supplement the old public presentations and hearings that still form the backbone of the interaction between the planner and the interested parties in city planning processes. As a reason to the state of affairs I am pointing to the already mentioned problems of resources in the actual city planning praxis. Research about the desired qualities of urban places has concentrated on user-experiences mapped through the same soft-GIS and e-planning methods, where the cultural background of the participant has not been asked. Needless to say, there is no participatory action research done in Finland about participatory city planning methods or urban places in a multicultural context within a feminist framework either.

When searching for applicable research we have to turn to look at Sweden as usual. It offers a good base for comparison because of the same kind of a social system and culture. Besides, it has a longer history in receiving immigrants and doing gender research than Finland. Carina Listerborn has got closest to my research subjects in her case studies about participatory city planning with immigrant women in Malmö (Listerborn 2008 and 2009). However, she has not a viewpoint of a practising city planner on the research subjects while being a cultural geographer herself. Furthermore, she does not offer any practical solutions, how to do things in a better way. This is obviously being done in Husby in praxis by architects but not in research terms (Dagens Nyheter 2015). What I would need as a practising city planner, would be an evaluation of suitable methods to work with and some guidelines of planning urban places in a multicultural context. This is why I chose a qualitative case study for my research: It gives a good platform to get in-depth information and to perform experiments in a geographically limited area and in a chronologically limited period. It is time to introduce this platform – case Suvela.

CASE STUDY

About the setting

I chose Suvela in Espoo as my case study area, because it is a typical Finnish and Scandinavian suburb: It is built during the 60's and 70's, it has higher percentage of municipal rental apartments, immigrants, unemployed, lower education, single-parent households, residents receiving income support, etc compared with other housing areas and it suffers from low status due to all these reasons. Suvela also offers an excellent base for multidimensional comparison because of its long and rich history in urban regeneration.

Suvela has its origin in multicultural city planning: in an international architectural competition won by a team of Polish architects in 1967. The competition was arranged by the commune of Espoo which needed a new centre for its constantly growing population. There was a massive resettlement going on from the countryside to the cities in Finland during the 1960's and 1970's as elsewhere in Scandinavia. The winner plan represented planning ideals of the era with overestimated growth expectations of inhabitants, traffic separation and deck constructions. Building the area was started hastily in Suvela in 1970-1973 outside of the actual centre of Espoo, since the commune owned land there. The profit expectations of both the commune and the building firms raised the buildings in Suvela with two extra floors on average and left the ground floor service spaces out (Maisala 2008). While bad guidance of the city and cultural differences in communication delayed the realization of the plan, the planning ideals turned soon old-fashioned. At the same time the oil crisis put building elsewhere in the centre of Espoo to a halt right after the commune turned a city in 1972. The new apartments in isolated blocks of flats in Suvela were suddenly too far from the housing markets of Helsinki region and unwanted also because of their bad quality and hence bad reputation as well. Therefore the city established a special project to boost building in the centre of Espoo already in 1973 – right after it was finished. Multicultural city planning, where multiculturalism means multicultural planners, had somewhat unsucceeded already in the beginning.

Suvela has experienced four urban regeneration waves during each decade after its unsuccessful birth like many other suburbs in Finland. First awakening to the physical and social problems of the new suburbs arose by the mid 80's, which gave a start to a national SOFY-project (SOFY = development of co-operation models to integrate social and physical aspects in planning and development of housing areas) with the help of a financial boom of the time. Suvela was one of the areas which played as a stage for different kinds of participatory city planning experiments to improve its physical quality and social status. However, the results of the SOFY-project in Suvela were seen mostly in the physical environment at the expense of the social one partly due to the heavy organizational structures of resident participation and co-operation (Kaupunkisuunnitteluvirasto 1990). Suvela went through another urban regeneration boom in the late 90's. The ministry of the environment had started a national suburb program to boost the Finnish building sector that was suffering from the stagnation after the collapse of the former Soviet Union. However, this time the results were merely cosmetic in Suvela. By the millennium Espoo had grown to the second largest city in Finland with a flourishing economy, good city image and an exceptional city structure of five equal city centres helped by the pull of its big neighbour of Helsinki. The city noticed that its old centre had got badly behind of its other centres. Therefore, Espoo decided to establish a special project to boost building at the old centre of Espoo – once again. When the ministry of the environment announced a special suburb program after the international financial crisis of the year 2007 to boost the building sector – also once again – Espoo decided to sign up Suvela for it. Suvela was enrolled in the suburb program during 2008-2011 and almost right after it in a housing area program funded by the same ministry during 2013-2015. During the latter period the program area included also the rest of the old centre of Espoo. There are certainly many lessons to be learnt in city planning from all these urban regeneration rounds which are by no means unique in Scandinavia. However, the most interesting thread in this development for the research at hands is the simultaneous rise of multiculturalism in Finland, which makes multicultural city planning mean multicultural participants as well.

Both the amount and percentage of immigrants has increased in Finland and especially in the Helsinki region as the wave motion of urban regeneration has been going on. While still in 1990 the percentage of foreign citizens in the population was only 0,5 % in Finland and 1,2 % in Espoo, today the numbers are 4,4 % and 9,7 %.¹ The change has been biggest during the 21st century. There is a tendency that the percentage of immigrants rises fastest in certain areas, which are very often the suburbs built during the 1960's and 1970's (Vilkama 2006). Reasons for this phenomenon are both structural (e.g. the location of rental apartments) and individual (e.g. the desire to live close to the extended family). This happens also in Suvela, where already 31 % of the residents have a foreign background – a significant percentage according to the Finnish standards.² The change has been so rapid that not even the development program for the old centre of Espoo, which the city accepted in 2007, took practically any notice of multiculturalism in its objectives or procedures. Immigrants did not exist in the project plan of Suvela for the national suburb program in 2008-2011 either. It was not until Suvela attended the housing area program in 2013-2015 when multiculturalism of the area was taken into account in city planning at the official level. When evaluating the multicultural planning of Espoo in general according to the policy index created by A. Qadeer (2009), we can state that Espoo lacks still way behind its North-American counterparts: The medium-sized cities of 100 000-500 000 inhabitants in the metropolitan regions in Canada had adopted 11.6 policies out of 19 in the index on average, while Espoo just about three.³

Policy and Practice Index of Multicultural Planning

1. Providing minority language facilities, translations and interpretation, in public consultations.
2. Including minority representatives in planning committees and task forces as well as diversifying planning staff.
3. Including ethnic/minority community organizations in the planning decision-making processes.
4. Recognition of ethnic diversity as a planning goal in Official/Comprehensive Plans.
5. City-wide policies for culture-specific institutions in plans, e.g., places of worship, ethnic seniors' homes, cultural institutions, funeral homes, fairs and parades, etc.
6. Routinely analyzing ethnic and racial variables in planning analysis.
7. Studies of ethnic enclaves and neighbourhoods in transition.
8. Policies/design guidelines for sustaining ethnic neighbourhoods.
9. Policies/strategies for ethnic commercial areas, malls and business improvement areas.
10. Incorporating culture/religion as an acceptable reason for site-specific accommodations/minor-variances.
11. Accommodation of ethnic signage, street names and symbols.
12. Policies for ethnic-specific service needs.
13. Policies for immigrants' special service needs.
14. Policies/projects for ethnic heritage preservation.
15. Guidelines for housing to suit diverse groups.
16. Promoting ethnic community initiatives for housing and neighbourhood development.
17. Development strategies taking account of inter-cultural needs.
18. Promoting and systematizing ethnic entrepreneurship for economic development.
19. Policies/strategies for promoting ethnic art and cultural services.
20. Accommodating ethnic sports (e.g., cricket, bocce, etc) in playfield design and programming.

Figure 1. Policy and Practice Index of Multicultural Planning by Mohammad A. Qadeer (2009).

Keeping the result of this evaluation in mind as the broader picture, I made a survey over the various city planning documents produced for Suvela to examine, whether the two problems mentioned at the beginning of this paper – lack of immigrants' participation and lack of attention to their needs in city planning – exist or not. I chose such a time period for the survey when there have been most resources available in city planning in Suvela, that is, during 2008-2015 when Suvela participated in the two latest national urban regeneration programs for the suburbs and other housing areas. The city of Espoo got then considerable financial subsidizes from the state and useful knowhow from the other attendants in the program to put into practise in Suvela. There were altogether 25 research, development and planning projects conducted during the chosen period in addition to 13 normal detailed plans and street and park plans required by the legislation.

The project material showed two things: Firstly, only less than half of the projects had included multiculturalism somehow either in the objectives or procedures and secondly, only a fraction of all the participants in the projects that included participation in the first place had been immigrants. If this is the case in an area, which has more immigrant residents and has had them longer than on average in Finland and which has had a lot of extra resources for city planning, the answer to both the questions above is yes: Immigrants participate very little in city planning and their needs are paid very little attention to. If these are the problems indeed, it is time to tackle them, at first with some participatory city planning methods and then with some characteristics of the urban places.

About the methods

As the literature review showed, there is no research done about evaluation of different participatory city planning methods in a multicultural planning context. Thus, in order to find out which methods a city planner should use to increase immigrants' participation and/or to get relevant information about their needs, I had to test them myself.

I selected certain qualitative research methods that functioned concurrently as participatory city planning methods on the basis of five criteria. Firstly, because I was doing research independently without any research assistants or colleagues, the methods had to be so simple that I could carry them out on my own, in other words the same prerequisite of optimizing the workforce as in the city planning praxis at the communal sector today. Secondly, since I also know, how little time there is to use for each city planning project in practice, the methods had to be as little time consuming as possible. Thirdly, I had very little money to use for testing the methods as a poor doctorate student who's studying with the help of a small grant, the methods were not allowed to cost a lot – the same situation again as in real life at the communal sector in these days. Fourthly, as my research aims also at some guidelines for planning urban places in multicultural housing areas, the methods had to serve certain planning purposes as well. And finally, the methods should differ from each other in which way and how much they require participation from the immigrants to see, if this has any influence on the grade of participation. All in all, the methods I chose, were workforce-, time- and cost-effective as well as usable in city planning and variant in relation to the amount of immigrants' participation.

As my research is based on grounded theory, the implementation of the research has brought some additions and minor changes to the methods chosen in the beginning. I shall come back to them a little later in this paper. Because the research is still going on, the latter part of the research is still partly open in form. The module named 'plan' belongs to the part in the case study where I examine the urban places. The module named 'event' means a multicultural event that I am arranging together with different actors in Suvela as a way of demonstrating the plan. Both the plan and the event belong to this PAR case study as a summary of the results and not as methods, while giving comments in the event (the form is still open) is a method. The emphasis in the use of methods lies at the data gathering phase, because it is the most important phase in a city planning process according to the law. At the moment the overall research design looks like the following:

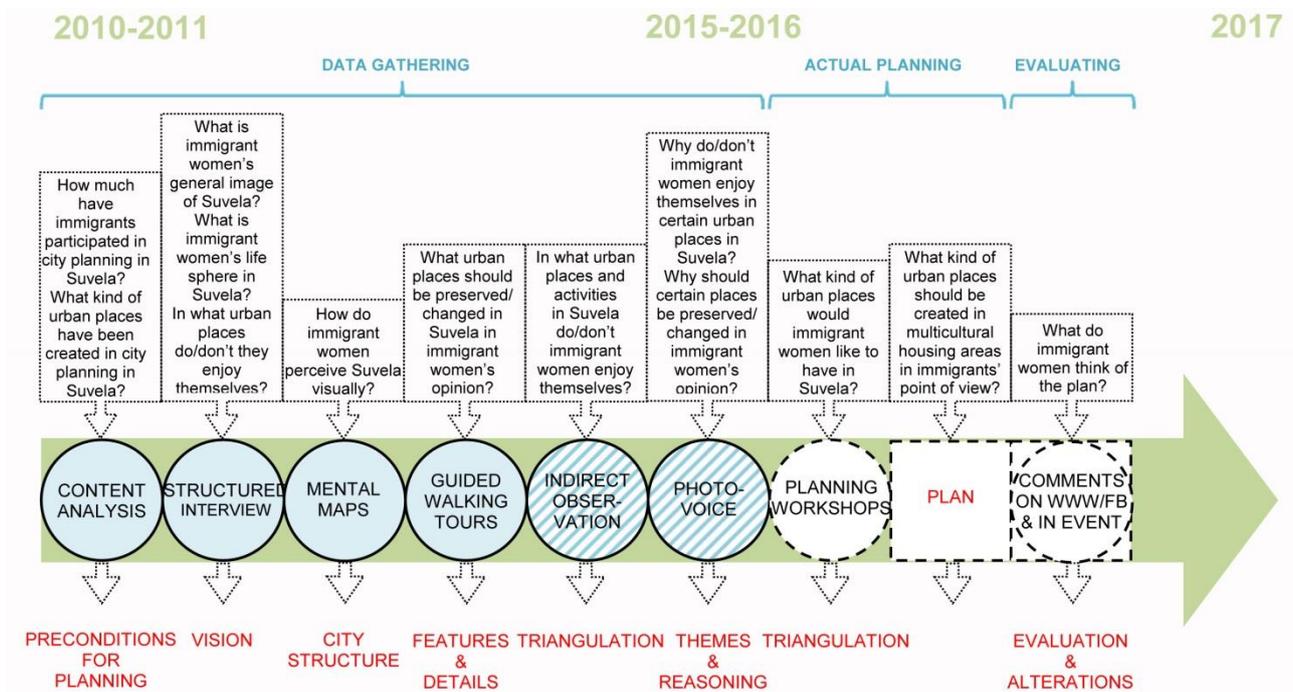


Figure 2. The research design.

The chosen methods are by no means new in themselves. Some of them have been used in city planning for long but not particularly with immigrants (e.g. mental maps), while some of these methods have been used only rather recently with immigrants but not particularly in city planning (e.g. photovoice). In this case study I analyze how the chosen methods work both with immigrants and in city planning. The overall evaluative perspective belongs to the city planner as stated in the introduction of this paper but the methods are examined partly also from the immigrants' viewpoint. Even though the chosen methods are more or less old, it is more or less a new context, multicultural environment, where they are used.

The evaluation follows the chronology of the method implementation: Getting participants, applying the method, analyzing the data and using the results. These are evaluated by the same criteria that were used as preconditions numbers 1-4 for the choice of methods: 1) need of work force, 2) length of time, 3) amount of expenses and 4) usability of results meaning validity and reliability. From immigrants' viewpoint there are four different parameters that describe the way or amount of participation, the precondition number 5 for the choice of methods: 1) form of communication, 2) way of information perception, 3) number of participants and 4) length of time. While some methods are based on written communication (e.g. comments on internet and facebook), some are based on visual communication (e.g. mental maps). Again, some of the methods emphasize visual perception (e.g. mental maps), some auditory perception (e.g. structured interview) and some kinetic perception (e.g. guided walking tours). Half of the methods are based on one-to-one communication (structured interviews, mental maps, comments on internet and facebook), whereas the other half is based on group communication (guided walking tours, photovoice, workshops). Some of the methods do not require much time from the participants (e.g. mental maps), whereas some of them require more (e.g. workshops). All the chosen methods are different kinds of mixtures of the four criteria and the four parameters. To sum up, the methods are at first examined phase by phase and then compared with each other method by method according to the criteria and with the parameters mentioned. Because the research is qualitative, the results will be descriptive instead of numerous and showing more relative differences than absolute qualities. The research documents that the method evaluation is based on are my field notes and research diary.

Even though the research is still going on, there are already some general remarks to be presented.

Getting the participants.

First of all, getting the participants has been by far the most difficult task in the case study. I have tried several different ways in reaching them, some successively and some simultaneously. I have used public information boards, contacted different societies, searched for key persons and tracked people with the snowball method. This is what I have discovered so far:

- Formal information sheets on notice boards in public places work with immigrants even less than with native citizens.
- Ethnic societies are as handy as any other societies in spreading the call but at first they have to exist.⁴
- In order to find the key persons or to use the snowball method you have to know personally the scene or someone familiar with the area, which often means that you have to spend time in the area – more when it is a question of immigrants than with native citizens in order to build mutual trust.
- The most efficient way is simply to go to the places where immigrants usually spend their time: Either to public places like residential parks and shopping centres where presenting a short interview or drawing a map to random participants is still possible, or when a more committed group is needed as in photovoice or in planning workshops, semipublic places like language classes. They have turned out to be a win-win solution for the problem of participation, because immigrants are motivated to participate in them in order to learn the new language and hence city planners reach their participants. Motivation may still be lacking due to the general uncertainty of the life situation and in women's case also because of childcare and household duties.

To sum up, in order to find the participants it is worthwhile to use different media simultaneously, especially informal ones such as different kinds of social groups and networks, and remember that it takes both time to build the trust and motivation to build the will to participate.

Applying the method.

The short duration of implementation and the small amount of participants improves the appliance of the method. The easier and faster the method can be applied, the less commitment it requires from the participant and thus the smaller effort it takes from the city planner to find the participant. No one in my case study refused to draw a mental map which was quickly done. On the other hand, photovoice that consisted of taking pictures alone beforehand and then discussing them in a group afterwards, turned out to be too much even for a motivated language group. Because immigrants' many cultures and languages can cause problems in mutual understanding, it is good to limit the amount of participants in group work lower than with native citizens and to use ethnically differentiated groups. This was how I proceeded with guided walking tours, where I had three groups of only three participants of the same nationality in each. Using visual methods may not be any easier than using written methods, because they often require an explanation anyway, while methods based on both auditory and kinesthetic perception are a good combination, because change of information is backed by both gestures and surroundings under discussion.

Analyzing the data.

The case study showed also that the method which is easy to get participants for and apply, gives results that are necessarily not so easy to analyze. This was especially true with mental maps which give even more room for interpretation with immigrants. Usually the visual data causes most problems in interpreting it. On the other hand, in some methods like in the guided walking tours, the feedback can be everything between the heaven and the earth so that it has to be classified many times. The easiest methods in analyzing are the most traditional ones like the structured interview or indirect observation which have either a clear question to be answered or a measurable matter to be followed.

Using the results.

The methods are usable as far as they give valid and reliable results. Validity and reliability are especially vulnerable, because the case study is based on cultural encounters where the risk for misunderstandings on both sides is higher than usually. At the beginning of my case study I had some kind of a picture about the purposes that I would use the methods for (see the research design in figure 2). However, the case study has

showed that on one hand some methods have not quite served the expected purpose (e.g. photovoice) and on the other hand, some have served also other purposes (e.g. guided walking tours), while the rest have given the result that I also expected (e.g. the structured interview). For this reason, for example, I decided to use photovoice after the guided walking tours, because they did not quite give the kind of outcome I needed for defining desired urban places. At the same time I realized how I could use guided walking tours better. In addition to adding and altering methods I also discovered new and altering purposes the methods could be used for. The purpose of the research is thus not only to help choosing the right method but also to use it right.

Strengthening reliability, on the contrary, is a broader issue. Although I decided not to use a special interpreter or a translator in my case study due to the preconditions for the choice of methods mentioned earlier, I did have some key words translated in structured interviews and the mental map assignment by fellow citizens who knew enough Finnish to help me in order to increase the reliability of perceptions. Again, it has turned out along the research that it is nevertheless good to have one or two extra pair of eyes or hands for documentation in order to increase the reliability of observations. Therefore, I had the teacher of the group and/or a fellow researcher as my assistant in photovoice and planning workshops in addition to my own research diary and field notes, which have been the more detailed and systematic, the more complicated the method. Furthermore, I have used indirect observation for triangulation of the research in order to increase the reliability of the results. The overlapping data from other different methods serves the same purpose.

Finally, I have used indirect observation also in the same way as it is used in empathic design. In empathic design the designer tries to get a deeper understanding of how it feels to be, act and think as the informant with participation, observation and partial immersion of roles between the designer and the user. In doing so, the designer tries to create new or better products and services for the user in the same way as I would try to plan new or better environment for the resident as a city planner. It is the same thing that I pursue as a researcher in this case study too. Hence, as part of my research, I have also more and more intentionally read novels, watched TV-documents and films and listened to the music telling about immigrants' lives to increase my own empathy for the research subjects. Fine arts are by far the best way to do it and another way to increase understanding beside the traditional science. Whereas empathy increases understanding, understanding increases reliability. Experiencing this kind of books, TV-documents, films and music can be seen as some sort of cultural and empathic probes to me, the same way as the chosen participatory city planning methods can be seen as some sort of design probes to the immigrants. Both cultural and design probes are used as established design methods and subjects of research in the field of co-design⁵ – here the field is just city planning instead. I consider this kind of 'probes', empathic methods⁶, as one serious way of altering the role of the city planner in a multicultural city planning context that many researchers call for (Sandercock 2004, Rahder & Milgrom 2004, Listerborn 2008). This altering role of the city planner is the other side of integration, which thus does not concern only immigrants.

The final test of usability of the chosen methods, their validity and reliability, is the evaluation of the plan. While the city plan rounds up the different characteristics of the desired urban places in multicultural housing areas, the evaluation done by the immigrant women tests if the methods have got them right. If participatory city planning methods mean giving voice to people, the plan of desired urban places makes them visible. It is now that we enter the other part of the case study: urban places.

About the urban places

The case study – the use of the chosen participatory city planning methods and the creation of the city plan as a summary of the output from them – can be seen also as an example of one city planning case, even though it is not a real-life one connected to any official city planning issue. This makes the case study belong to research through practice or research through design. The purpose of the design (here: the city planning process) is to define what characteristics urban places should have in multicultural housing areas from the immigrants' point of view. Therefore, I analyze the characteristics step by step as part of the city planning

process: creating a vision for the housing area, defining the planning area, rectifying the city structure, sorting out areas to change and to preserve and specifying the features of the desired urban places. By acting this way I bring the bottom-up feedback from participants to the planning table of the city planner right from the start of the city planning process. This way the characteristics of desired urban places are set in a larger framework. The 'imaginary' city planning case is here a conscious choice: It gives more freedom and independence for the research.

The research material gathered so far consists of several different kinds of documents like in ethnographic research in general:

- short structured interviews, the results of which have been transferred partly into a form of a short survey and partly into GIS maps
- mental map drawings
- notes from the guided walking tours
- photographs and notes from photovoice
- charts from indirect observation
- fieldnotes and
- research diary.

The research data will still be supplemented by the planning workshops and comments on internet and facebook as well as in the multicultural event in Suvela. Their form of documentation is still partly open.

As the research is still going about urban places too, there are only some preliminary remarks that can be made at this point. First of all, immigrant women see Suvela mainly as a child-friendly, multicultural and compact housing area, which I take as the general vision for Suvela. Secondly, immigrant women spend most of their time in an area defined by the residential park, the shopping centre and their own home, which I use for defining the general planning area. Thirdly, immigrant women perceive Suvela sequentially through paths and nodes rather than spatially through landmarks, districts and edges according to the Lynchian city image elements (Lynch 1988), which I use for rectifying the city structure. Fourthly, guided walking tours gave general suggestions of what places to preserve and what to change as well as detailed suggestions of desired features for the places to be changed. Lastly, photovoice covered unifying themes and gave reasoning for the planning measures.

If we then elevate these results from the local level to a more general level, there are two points that I want to bring forth. Both deal with the dichotomy 'different – similar'. To test if immigrants have different needs for urban places compared with the native citizens, I had either a small reference group of Finnish women (in structured interview and mental maps) or used other relevant research done in Suvela as comparison to my case study (in guided walking tours). Because I had this presumption in my mindset, I was also oriented towards finding the presupposed differences between immigrant and Finnish women. Despite this fact, the results from the case study have showed mostly the opposite so far. Both themes and details of the feedback received from the immigrant women about desired urban places have been much the same as with the Finnish women regardless of the vast heterogeneity that immigrant women have represented. This can be either a sign of assimilation or a sign of such integration, where own culture is treasured merely in the private sphere. In the classical definition of integration, immigrants see their own and the new culture as of equal value (Berry 1980). Where, when and how these two cultures are expressed concretely in immigrants' lives can differ, however. For immigrant women the private sphere can actually be much more important than the public sphere, and therefore need to express their culture in city planning may not necessarily exist. Inside the feminist framework this has to be respected as equally valuable as the will to act in the public sphere. Even if this, on the other hand, is seen as immigrant women's oppression from a westerner's viewpoint, there must be no one, who would think that all the layers of two different cultures could be expressed simultaneously at the same extent. In democracies it is majorities that define the major political and social structures and the minorities always adjust to them in most parts. It is also as impossible a thought that the society could take into consideration the needs of all the minorities. Integration is making compromises both in structural and individual level and as being such, it is also parallel to city planning. The third explanation

for my preliminary discovery can also be the simple fact that I have not reached in my case study under the surface yet after all, which will be further examined in the rest of the research.

When searching for the presupposed differences between immigrants and native citizens, I also ran into a phenomenon, which I call a dilemma of integration. It means that the better immigrants learn to communicate and express their needs in city planning, the more they are integrated in the new culture and thus changed in their needs, and vice versa. Guided walking tours and photovoice in my case study are a good example of this dilemma. While the original purpose of guided walking tours was to get an overview of cultural differences that immigrant women see in their environment, it turned out to be an overview of things that are just generally good or bad, because the participants had lived in Finland already for 6-21 years. Whereas in photovoice, where I asked immigrant women to take pictures of both good and bad places in their housing area, some of them did not find any bad places. These immigrant women had moved to Finland less than one year ago and saw everything through the rosy glasses of the newly-arrived. This dilemma shows how difficult it is to find out, what immigrants really need and if their needs really are that different or not compared with the native citizens. The dilemma also points at the problem with the definition of 'immigrant' that was mentioned in the beginning: Whose opinions and whose needs are valid to represent the whole group named immigrants, only of the newcomers or also of those who are already well integrated; of those who think somewhat differently or of those who do not any more – when does an immigrant stop being an immigrant?

CONCLUSIONS

Even though the case study is still not closed, we go back to the presumptions of the research mentioned earlier in the paper:

- immigrants communicate in a different way compared with the city planner and
- immigrants' needs are different from the native citizens.

The first one deals with the methods and the other one with the urban places. First a few words about the methods.

Who, where, when, how

Although the focus of this research is in the question 'how', the case study has showed already by now that there are far more important questions in immigrants' participation.

The first one is 'who': Who is the city planner? This case study could not simply have been made by a man. As a woman I have been able to enter immigrant women's world and follow them even to their homes by being not just a stranger or a visitor but also an initiate or even a bit of an insider (Flick 2002). In this research the gender card worked on my behalf but it could have happened the other way round if I were a man. Thus the 'who' question is not just about the planner but also about the participant. Beyond gender is still personality. Although gender and personality is something permanent, we can tune them in certain limits. Empathy gives the means for such tuning which is much needed in multicultural context. Feminist or gender-sensitive city planning should be empathic city planning. Participation is thus a question about the gender and personality and empathy to overcome the first two.

The second question is 'where': Where the participation is supposed to happen? I went in this case study to residential parks, international meeting places, shopping centres and language courses. I will still enter discussion groups and join common events to reach the participants instead of waiting for them to come to me. Because the city planner must offer the same possibilities of participation for all those whom the planning affects according to the legislation, the new arenas must be seen only as additions to the old ones. Therefore, participation is all the more hard footwork.

The third question is 'when': When is the participation going to happen? Most immigrants live very family-centered life due to the lack of other social ties around. At the same time they live also much glocally because of their life situation where they have roots still in their home country and family members often scattered all over the world. Immigrants' top priorities are learning the new language, finding a job or an education and getting the family together – if not permanently, at least temporarily by visiting them more or less regularly. These priorities do not give way to joining some separate public meetings somewhere outside of home some funny evening – for immigrant women even less because they are often taking care of home and the children. Participation is thus also time planning; that is, synchronizing different kinds of public and private activities so that they support the everyday life of participants (Horelli et al. 2013).

The 'how' question is at the same time the most and least important one after all. If it is seen merely as a matter of methods, it is the least important question to be answered in order to increase immigrants' participation. Methods do not help no matter how participatory they are, if there are no participants. For that reason, the most important question it is exactly then, when it is a matter of getting participants. The case study showed that the most effective way to get participants is through different kinds of social networks, which temporary groups and formal societies are good examples of. It is hence highly recommendable that immigrants are supported to get organized themselves. Moreover, because city planning is a system based on representative democracy, immigrants have then also better chances to get their voices heard, when decisions on common environment are made.

To conclude, the answer to the question whether the presumption number one is true or not, is yes: Immigrants do communicate in a different way from the city planner when communication is understood in its broadest sense – as a question of who, where, when and how. This is all the more important, the less resources there are available in city planning, in order to focus them right. This means that if I as a city planner want to reach the new residents, I have to learn their ways to communicate. When I have learnt how to communicate, I can start planning. Finally a few words about the urban places.

Building on common ground

At first sight there may be a lot that differs 'them' from 'us'. Language, looks, clothes, politics, religion: what we often consider as culture. Looking at where immigrants are different may prevent from seeing where they are similar. We all share the same human dimensions and the same senses, which form the basis for human architecture and city planning (Gehl 1996, p. 65). We also share the same basic human needs, which form the basis for all human action (Maslow 1943). If we then are more similar with each other than different, what can culture-sensitive city planning then give us? Multiculturalism can be seen as a test for our whole city planning system: If it works also with them, who are hard to get activated or who do not find it motivating enough to participate, despite all the cultural obstacles, it must work also with the rest in easier circumstances. A city planning system that is paying attention even to its weakest members, is a sign of a civilized society.

All in all, the answer to the question whether the presumption number two is correct or not, is no: Immigrants do not seem to have so much different needs from the native citizens on the basis of the case study presented in this paper than I supposed. Most immigrants want to be part of the new society and this grouping happens by searching the common nominators. Therefore, successful multicultural city planning is not so much about searching for what separates 'us' from 'them' but finding what we all have in common. It is that, what successful multicultural city planning should be built on.

NOTES

¹ Statistics Finland, situation on 31st of December.

² Aluesarjat, statistics about Helsinki region, show that the highest percentage of people whose mother tongue is other than Finnish or Swedish in Helsinki is in the housing area of Meri-Rastila: 32,7 % (situation on 1st January 2015).

³ Mohammad A. Qadeer has also created a following interesting ladder of planning principles supporting multiculturalism in his article 'Pluralistic Planning for Multicultural Cities: The Canadian Practice' (1997), the first step of the ladder being number 1:

- 7 A multicultural vision of the development strategy for a city or region
- 6 Cultural and racial differences reflected in planning policies and acknowledged as bases for equitable treatment
- 5 Provision of specific public facilities and services for ethnic communities
- 4 Special District designation for ethnic neighborhoods and business enclaves
- 3 Accommodation of diverse needs through amendments and exceptions, case by case
- 2 Inclusionary Planning Process-participation by and representation of multicultural groups on planning committees
- 1 Facilitating access by diverse communities to the planning department.

⁴ There are only two ethnic societies that have some activities in Suvela, both are small and not affiliated especially in Suvela.

⁵ Tuuli Mattelmäki describes probes in her doctoral thesis 'Design probes' (2006) in the following way:

Probes are based on *user participation* by means of *self-documentation*. The users or potential users collect and document the material, working as active participants in the user-centred design process. Probes are a collection of assignments through which or inspired by which the users can record their experiences as well as express their thoughts and ideas.

Secondly, probes look at *the user's personal context and perceptions*. The purpose is to outline human phenomena and users, as well as introduce the user's perspective to enrich design. The assignments focus the users' attention and record their daily lives including social, aesthetic and cultural environment, needs, feelings, values and attitudes.

Thirdly, *probes have an exploratory character*. They explore new opportunities rather than solve problems that are known already. This characteristic relates the probes to the "wicked" design problems (Rittel & Webber 1984) and concept design, often with an experimental goal (Keinonen et al. 2003). Probes sound out the field of design, trying to find and delineate alternative solutions as the explorative probing described by Schön (1983) does. Probes are meant to support both the designers and the users in their interpretations and creativity. They are used to ask the users to experiment, express and explicate their experiences. The open probe assignments are both descriptive and explorative. The openness and room for interpretation also involve the expectation of a surprising or unexpected result." (p. 40)

⁶ Ilpo Koskinen describes empathic methods in the Preface of 'Empathic Design' (2003) as following:

"Empathic methods are always user-centered in that they require contact with real users. They are also

- *Visual and tactile*, providing designers with inspiration, not just data.
- *Deliberately cheap and "low tech"* and, as such, easy to adopt in the real world where money is scarce.
- *Interpretive*: to be able to design effectively designers need to understand how people understand themselves.

- *Playful and fun*. When exploring new ideas, users are almost invariably asked to imagine and dream in a future world created by designers. To be rewarding such exercises must be fun.
- *Tested in reality*. We report cases from real product and concept development because we believe that this is the best way to make sure the methods we propose work where they should: at the front line of imagination in the corporate reality.
- *Targeted at the fuzzy front end*, as Jonathan Cagan and Craig Vogel from Carnegie Mellon University have recently (2001) called the early phases of product development.

When we talk about “empathic design,” we mean empirical research techniques that provide designers access to how users experience their material surroundings and the people in it, including themselves as key characters of their everyday lives. In empathic design, the designer has to go through some degree of role immersion, *and* an attempt to seriously keep her data-inspired imagination in check with empirical data. Research inevitably inspires her, but her research creates more than inspiration: it also creates an empathic understanding that helps her to choose between hunches and concepts. In Zygmunt Bauman’s imagery, she understands herself as an interpreter.” (pp. 7-8)

REFERENCES

- Arnstein, Sherry R., 1969. A Ladder of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Volume 35, Issue 4, pp. 216-224.
- Autio, Vilma, 2015. *Maailma kylässä Meri-Rastilassa. Näkökulmia monikulttuuristen asuinalueiden kehittämiseen*. Diplomityö. Espoo: Aalto-yliopisto, Taiteiden ja suunnittelun korkeakoulu, Arkkitehtuurin laitos.
- Botero, Andrea, 2013. *Expanding Design Space(s). Design in Communal Endeavors*. Aalto University publication series, doctoral dissertations 85/2013. Helsinki: Aalto ARTS Books.
- Fast, Mia, Kröger, Miia and Yoshizumi, Päivi, 2010. *Empowering Immigrant Women through the Neighborhood Café*. Espoo: Laurea University of Applied Sciences.
- Flick, Uwe, 2002. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. Trowbridge: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Fuad-Luke, Dina, 2012. *How was it for you? A survey by OUTReach, OURCity’s sub-project, to record the views and experiences of individuals with immigrant background in relation to their access to and use of the public services*. Helsinki: City of Helsinki.
- Gehl, Jan, 1996. *Life Between Buildings. Using Public Space*. Skive: Arkitektens Forlag.
- Haraway, Donna, 1998. Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14, No. 3, pp. 575-599.
- Horelli, Liisa, ed., 2013. *New Approaches to Urban Planning. Insights from Participatory Communities*. Aalto University Publication series Aalto-ST 10/2013. Helsinki: Aalto University.
- Horelli, Liisa and Kaaja, Mirkka, 2002. Opportunities and constraints of ‘internet-assisted urban planning’ with young people. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Volume 22, Issues 1–2, March, pp. 191–200.
- Horelli, Liisa and Wallin, Sirkku, 2013. Gender-sensitive e-planning for sustaining everyday life. In: Roberts, M. and Sanchez de Madriaga, I., eds. *Fair Shared Cities: The Impact of Gender Planning*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
- Kahila, Maarit and Kyttä, Marketta, 2009. SoftGIS as a bridge builder in collaborative urban planning. In: Geertman, Stan and Stillwell, John, eds., 2009. *Planning Support Systems Best Practice and New Methods*, Part IV, Vol. 95, pp. 389-411, Springer Netherlands.
- Kaupunkisuunnitteluvirasto, 1990. *I Suvelan kehittämissuunnitelmaehdotus. II Yhteissuunnittelun kehittäminen Espoossa*. Espoo: Espoon kaupunki.
- Kyttä, Marketta, Kaaja, Mirkka and Horelli, Liisa, 2004. An Internet-Based Design Game as a Mediator of Children’s Environmental Visions. *Environment and Behavior*, January, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 127-151.

-
- Kyttä, Marketta and Kahila, Mirikka, 2011a. SoftGIS methodology-building bridges in urban planning. *The Global Magazine for Geomatics*, http://www.gim-international.com/issues/articles/id1677-SoftGIS_Methodology.html
- Kyttä, Marketta, 2011b. SoftGIS methods in planning evaluation. In: Hull, Angela, Alexander, E.R., Khakee, Abdul and Woltjer, Johan, eds. *Evaluation for participation and sustainability in planning*, pp. 334-354. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Listerborn, Carina, 2009. Kvinnors erfarenheter behöver bli mer synliga om de ska ha inflytande över Rosengårds utveckling. *Praktik & Teori*, nr 1, pp. 46-48.
- Listerborn, Carina, 2007. Who speaks? And who listens? The relationship between planners and women's participation in local planning in a multi-cultural urban environment. *GeoJournal*, 70, pp. 61-74.
- Lund, Lina, 2015. Männen får maka på sig. *Dagens Nyheter*, 26.11.
- Lynch, Kevin, 1988. *The Image of the City*. The M.I.T. Press.
- Maisala, Pertti, 2008. *Espoo - oma lukunsa : kaupunkisuunnittelun, kaupunkirakentamisen ja kaavoitushallinnon kehitys vuoteen 2000*. Espoo: Espoon kaupunkisuunnittelukeskus.
- Maununaho, Katja, 2006. *Monikulttuurinen asuinalue Hagalundiin*. Diplomityö. Tampere: Tampereen teknillinen yliopisto.
- Puustinen, Sari, 2006. *Suomalainen kaavoittajaprofessio ja suunnittelun kommunikatiivinen käänne*. Espoo: Frenckellin kirjapaino Oy.
- Qadeer, Mohammad A., 1997. Pluralistic Planning for Multicultural Cities: The Canadian Practice. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Volume 63, Issue 4, pp. 481-494.
- Qadeer, M., 2009. What is this thing called MULTICULTURAL PLANNING? *Plan Canada: Special Edition: Welcoming Communities: Planning for Diverse Populations*, p. 10-13.
- Qadeer, Mohammad Abdul and Agrawal, Sandeep Kumar, 2011. The Practice of Multicultural Planning in American and Canadian Cities. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, Vol.20(1), pp.132-156.
- Rahder, Barbara ja Milgrom, Richard, 2004. The Uncertain City: Making Space(s) for difference. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 13(1), ss. 27-45.
- Rinkinen, Kristiina, 2004. *Rivien väliin jäävät asukkaat: hiljaisten ryhmien osallistuminen ympäristösuunnittelussa*. Vantaa: Vantaan kaupunki.
- Saad-Sulonen, Joanna, 2014. *Combining Participations. Expanding The Locus Of Participatory E-Planning By Combining Participatory Approaches In The Design Of Digital Technology And In Urban Planning*. Aalto University publication series Doctoral Dissertations 11/2014. Helsinki: Aalto ARTS Books.
- Salgado, Mariana and Galanakis, Michail, 2014. '...so what?' – *Limitations of Participatory Design on Decision-making in Urban Planning*. PDC (Participatory Design Conference), Reflecting Connectedness, Volume 2, pp. 5-8.
- Sandercock, Leonie, 2004. Towards a Planning Imagination for the 21st Century. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Spring, Vol. 70, Issue 2, pp. 133-141.
- Silfverberg, Kalle, 2015. Feministinen suunnittelu ohjaa lähiön remonttia Tukholmassa – tarvittaessa mahdollista Helsingissäkin. *Helsingin sanomat*, 29.11.
- Staffans, Aija, 2004. *Vaikuttavat asukkaat. Vuorovaikutus ja paikallinen tieto kaupunkisuunnittelun haasteina*. Yhdyskuntasuunnittelun tutkimus- ja koulutuskeskuksen julkaisuja A 29. Espoo: Teknillinen korkeakoulu.
- Staffans, Aija and Väyrynen, Erja, eds., 2009. *Oppiva kaupunkisuunnittelu*. Arkkitehtuurin julkaisuja 2009/98. Espoo: Teknillinen korkeakoulu.