POLITICAL, PRACTICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL NOTIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF THE RIGHT TO THE CITY IN NEIGHBOURHOOD REGENERATION

Abstract

Informed by Henry Lefebvre's concept of the right to the city, this article discusses the issues of neighbourhood regeneration in two Finnish suburban residential neighbourhoods. The selected neighbourhoods represent relatively poor suburban areas with a high percentage of ethnic minority populations. The intention is to disclose some of the problems and potentials for participatory planning and design practices in these areas – processes that could carry out the ideals of the right to the city in urban regeneration – and to suggest that for this purpose, an interdisciplinary understanding of the relevance of current population changes in urban environment is needed.

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Introduction

Finnish urban planning tradition is based on 1960s and 1970s ideals of liberty and equality. It was an era of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in Nordic countries. By implication, a growing profession of architects and urban planners were contributing to develop new forms to accommodate the masses moving to urban areas. New housing with modernistic division of functions were built on pristine forest land areas as a spatial solution for the arising modern lifestyle. Today, Finland is still dealing with urbanisation within the urban fabric inherited from those past years, with ongoing urban regeneration and infill development projects. The population in Finnish urban areas is expected to grow considerably in the next few decades (von Bruun & Kirvelä 2009: 40-41), and a large portion of this growth is expected to be settled within existing built structure. However, the processes of urbanisation are changing, since they are now part and parcel of neoliberal economic restructuring, changes in household structures and growing international migration.

In the past decades, Finland has experienced rapid urbanisation and ethnic differentiation due to increased migration. Urban lifestyles are gaining new popularity, and out migration from city centres to urban periphery seems to have come to a halt in recent years (Laakso 2013; Helsingin Sanomat 2013). At the same time, urban poverty is increasing and concentrating in certain areas, primarily in the suburban neighbourhoods that were originally built to advance a modern lifestyle, equality and welfare (Kortteinen, Tuominen & Vaattovaara 2005; Vaattovaara & Kortteinen 2012; Vilkama,

Vaattovaara & Dhalmann 2013). Alongside unequal spatial distribution of socio-economic measures such as health, income, education and employment levels, ethnic differentiations have increased rapidly in suburban neighbourhoods, particularly in the largest cities (Vilkama et al. 2013: 485-488; Vilkama 2011: 136-139). Moreover, poor environmental quality, lack of services and lack of diversification in housing seem to add to the above-mentioned factors that create differentiations (Vilkama et al. 2013: 492-493).

Skifter Andersen (2003) draws attention to the interaction between social exclusion and physical decay in urban environment, arguing that 'segregation is not a simple consequence of social inequality, but a product of both social and spatial differentiation' (Skifter Andersen 2003: 125-126). Based on the analysis of case material collected from two Finnish suburban neighbourhoods, the aim of this article is to demonstrate that while the changes in urban population have increased the attention to urban environment with a demand for more varied urban residential areas, urban planning and design currently seem to lack tools to form adequate understanding about these changes, and to communicate about them with the local residents involved in urban regeneration projects. Current planning and design practices are much dependent on government policies based on prevalent neoliberal ideals. Neoliberalism 'proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade' (Harvey 2005: 2). As a result, urban areas are developed in accordance with real estate markers in order to succeed in the

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global competition of investment capital, with the means of iconic architecture and gentrified residential districts among other (Zukin 2009: 543-544). Mäenpää et al. (2000: 189) argue that the 1960s and 1970s ideals of a safe and just city in Finnish urban planning have turned into neoliberal policies for attractiveness and economic growth. The concerns about spatial exclusion and segregation, which previously were considered as matters concerning inhabitant well-being, are now perceived as issues of urban vitality and competition (Mäenpää et al. 2000). Similar emphasis features in the case material in this article, when observed problems concerning social matters or related image of the neighbourhood are thought to be solved by renovation and renewal projects aiming to increase the attractiveness and affect the currently sinking property prices on the area.

The importance of larger structural features notwithstanding, it seems important to focus attention on the actual, local everyday conditions for urban restructuring (Skifter Andersen 2003:156-159). Particularly it is important to recognise the potential of participatory design in neighbourhood regeneration projects, not just as a tool for developing more suitable spatial solutions, but also from the perspective of social justice. Accordingly, this article discusses the problems as well as the potentials for participatory planning and design through Lefebvre's (1996) concept of the right to the city. Growing urbanisation and social polarisation in urban areas have given new attention and importance to Lefebvre's work. His concept of the right to the city has been represented as a combining framework for different social and political movements and as a new radical decision-making model that ties the right to political participation to urban inhabitation instead of nationality or citizenship (Boer and de Vries 2009; Purcell 2002). Empirically, the article focuses on practical urban regeneration work executed in planning offices, municipal housing administrations, third sector organisations and on grassroots level in neighbourhood communities.

The right to the city

Lefebvre's discussions in *Urban Revolution* (2003) about the importance of urbanisation have gained relevance in recent decades. Globally, the number of people living in urban areas have grown to over half of the world's populations, and processes of industrialisation are increasingly interwoven with urbanisation (Smith 2003: xix-xxi). In the global North, neoliberal forms of urban governance have gained prominence with increasing collaboration among property capital, the state, retail capital and financial capital in urban regeneration (Smith 2003). In response to this, there is now a renewed interest for Lefebvre's concept of the right to the city (1996), especially among critical urban scholars, planners and activist groups.

The concept of the right to the city was developed in Lefebvre's *La Droit à la Ville* (1967), written in the eve of the late 1960s social and spatial struggles in France. According to Lefebvre, 'the *right to the city* is like a cry and a demand', which 'can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed *right to urban life*' (1996: 158). Today, the right to the city is often treated as a common conceptual framework for various social movements and scholars who call into question what they take to be negative forces of neoliberalism (Friedmann 1995; Harvey 2003; 2006; 2008; Isin 2000; Soja 2000). However, Stanek (2011: 2) and other commentators have asked whether the concept has turned into a mere slogan, an empty battle cry detached from its specific historical context.

Purcell (2002: 100-102) does not see the right to the city as a mere catchphrase, but instead emphasises its radical potential. He maintains that Lefebvre imagines and advocates a new urban politics of the inhabitant that would radically change the whole system of urban democracy, reorienting decision-making away from the state and call the power of private ownership into question. Importantly, the right to participation would be tied to urban inhabitation instead or nationality or citizenship. Purcell (2002: 102) also notes that the production of urban space is 'more than just planning the material space of the city; it involves producing and reproducing all aspects of urban life'. The residents of the city would be given the right to participate in all decision making that concerns the city, but this does not automatically mean that the right to the city would lead to a better or even more democratic urban politics and urban space. He reminds us that Lefebvre's concept is entirely contingent: it may have desirable or undesirable outcomes for the social and spatial structure of the city (2002: 100). With misinformed scalar choices in the differentiation between urban scale and different sub-scales about who has the right to participate and to what degree, the concept could work to reinscribe forms of domination (Purcell 2002: 104).

David Harvey (2003: 939) underlines that the right to the city should not be delimited to a right of access to what already exist; it should also be a right to change the city. As the cities change, so does our lifestyles, everyday routines and forms of socialisation take new forms. By changing the cities, we end up changing ourselves, and as Harvey puts it 'the right to make and remake ourselves in this way is […] one of the most precious of all human rights' (Harvey 2006: 84). This notion goes straight to the very foundation of urban planning. Though both Harvey and Lefebvre have linked the right to the city to urban social movements and grassroots developments, it has also important implications for the professions of urban planning and design. Stanek (2011: 27-48) argues that Lefebvre's interest in architecture and urban spaces emanates from his long-term involvement with architects and urbanists. His concept of social space was as an attempt to bridge the gaps between architectural practice and the social sciences, humanities and political engagement (Stanek 2011: 28).

Lefebvre's spatial triad consists of commonsensical perceived space that people encounter in daily activities, conceived space of professional knowledge, and lived space that represent spatial experiences of everyday life. These are all parts of the production of meaning in urban space. The triad has its translation into spatial terms with everyday spatial practices in the encountered physical-material environment, representations of space that are mentally constructed and spaces of representation as space as it might be, fully lived space (Lefebvre 1991: 38-40; Stanek 2011: 128-129). The inseparability of the triad suggests that social space is not just an opposition to material or architectural space, but that spatial architecture is a part of social space. Stanek sees that through his immediate communication with the design profession, Lefebvre saw the practice of planning and design as a constant to-and-fro reflection between representations and lived space (Stanek 2011: 131). Lefebvre (1991:40) emphasised that the spatial triad loses all its force if it is treated as an abstract model. According to Stanek (2011: 132), Lefebvre insisted on aiming at something concrete, which indicates that his concepts should not be seen as merely political expressions. Regarding the concept of the right to the city, this would mean that besides politics of the inhabitant, there is a need for architecture of the inhabitant that builds on the to-and-fro reflection between inhabitant participation and professional knowledge.

Urban regeneration in Turku and Espoo

The empirical material used in this article is from two Finnish suburban areas, Espoo Suvela in Helsinki metropolitan region and Varissuo in the city of Turku. These areas were selected for my PhD project, which investigates the questions of urban housing design in multicultural neighbourhoods. They were selected because of their development histories, current ethnic and social structures and future perspectives. Both areas are relatively diverse in ethnic terms, and they are among the most disadvantaged areas in their respective regions. In Suvela, there is a high level of inhabitants without secondary education, high level of unemployment and low average income rates, compared to Helsinki region averages or to other areas in Espoo (Hirvonen 2011: 14-15). In the Turku region, Varissuo is among the areas with lowest household income, highest unemployment and lowest education rates (Rasinkangas 2013: 178-180).

The development of both areas originates in architectural competitions organised in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The objectives were to create optimal social environments in both areas, but after completion in the 1970s, both Suvela and Varissuo became known for their large number of social housing blocks and social problems. Then again in Suvela, there are also a relatively high number of owner-occupied single family houses and terraced houses, and some owner-occupation in apartment blocks. However, a typical feature in Suvela's urban structure is that apartment blocks and smaller scale houses are situated in groups separated from each other (Hirvonen 2011: 7-9). In Varissuo, on the other hand, owner-occupied houses are mixed with apartment blocks. But despite the fact that owner-occupied apartments comprise almost 50 per cent of the housing stock, spatial differentiation remains. This suggests that mixed tenure types and variety in housing models do not in itself prevent processes of differentiation.

The data material was collected by mixed methods: following and observing ongoing regeneration projects in project meetings; conducting qualitative interviews with local actors in the city administrations, organisations and development projects as well as inhabitants with various ethnic backgrounds; collecting planning and design material that includes drawings, memos, public releases, blogs and reports; organising design workshops for ethnic minorities; participating and observing in workshops that were organised for concerned parties in the area. The purpose of the analysis is not to compare the areas, but to elucidate current planning and design practices and, scrutinise how official development ideas relate to grassroots perspectives in deprived, multicultural neighbourhoods through the lens of the right to the city.

Regeneration, renovation and participation cases

Case material shows that in Suvela and Varissuo, just as in many other Finnish suburban areas, the ageing built environment is in need of major renovations, and there are a number of structural problems to be dealt with. According to interviews with city administration personnel, the rising numbers of one-person households sets demands for housing stock reform, and an ageing population calls for more accessible environment (a large portion suburban buildings lack elevators). Besides, the high-rise buildings from the 1960s and 1970s are energy wise the least effective part of Finnish housing stock (Helsingin Energia 2011).

The regeneration projects that have been implemented on the areas in recent years are rather incremental and reformist, but there are also proposals for more radical renewals in both of the studied areas.[1] In both areas, the majority of the buildings are in need of major renovation. However, renovation projects tend to be carried out mainly to maintain property value, though in some cases, minor improvements to the quality of everyday environment are made, such as adding balcony glazing, better lightning and playground facilities. In Varissuo, the public housing company has carried out traditional renovation projects, rather than initiating more radical changes (for example infill projects). By contrast, the public housing company in Suvela has initiated a renewal project called Suvelan Onni (*the Happiness of Suvela*) with the view to demolish and reconstruct a part of the social tenements in a block with 253 apartments. This entails major changes in apartment sizes and diversification of tenure types. Interviews with project team members indicate that the idea is to change the perceived bad reputation of the area, which is considered to originate from the large number of social tenants. The new design is expected to increase the attractiveness and invite new investments to the area. Moreover, the interviews indicate that social housing tenants are seen as troublesome. This has in some cases lead to poor maintenance of environment, which in turn the inhabitants have experienced as has creating further problems, such as mould and pests.

Changing apartment structures can be seen as a tool to produce changes in the social structures in order to break segregation. However, when existing residents are displaced in order to meet the demands of the market, there is a conflict between individual and collective rights to access and to change the city. Current participatory planning practices in Finland are based on the land use and building act, which requires participation during each planning processes. The law is motivated by democratic ideals of inhabitant participation, and yet, it does not seem to recognise the impact of other factors on urban development. According to Mäenpää et al. (2000: 41-42), after the transfer of responsibility from public sector to private actors in the 1990s, municipal planning in Finland has lost its impact on market-driven partnerships. A large part of decisions are made before, by or after planning (Staffans 2012: 68), which means that major strategic decisions are already closed, or basic prerequisites needed for the decision making are not yet available, when participation practices start.

According to the land use and building act, a plan for participation shall be made for each planning process. In Suvela, the participation plan stated that the concerned parties include people who live in the area or nearby, property owners, communities, entrepreneurs and others whose residence, working or other conditions are influenced by the plan. This definition fulfils the requirements of the law (Ympäristöministeriö 2007:32), and basically meets the ideals of the concept of the right to the city, though it leaves out the residents of a wider city area. On the other hand, the regeneration plans in the Suvela case are made to attract new residents to the area, and to disperse so called ethnic and social concentration. This decision, which was made before the actual planning process had begun, and hence before any inhabitant participation, clearly conflicts with the concept of the right to the city.

In Varissuo, there was particularly one renovation case that required consultation with the residents, as it was implemented as a part of a project of the Ministry of the Environment (Ylitalo 2013: 68). A briefing session for the residents was organised, and the residents were asked to fill in a questionnaire about needed property improvements. They were also asked whether they would like to move

back to the apartments after the renovation, or whether they would like to move to some other areas (Ylitalo 2013: 69-70). However, since this briefing was organised after the design process, only a few details could be changed according to the residents' wishes. The proposed ideas of the housing company was that the design and the marketing activities were aimed at attracting more affluent residents to the area so as to achieve a balanced socio-economic structure with less than 20 per cent immigrants (Ylitalo 2013: 77). In the end, none of the original residents moved back (ibid).

In Suvela, the city decided to organise a briefing session in an early stage of the process, partly because the intention was to demolish parts of buildings. A local third sector social work organisation initiated and organised a pre-session for immigrant residents in a mosque in the block to inform about the project and the importance of the residents' participation in the process. This initiative suggests that there might be a need for special arrangements that encourage minority populations to participate in planning processes. It also underlines the importance of recruiting actors who can assist residents, in this case immigrant minorities, who are not familiar with the procedures of resident participation. However, just a few of the immigrant minorities who took part in the pre-session participated in the actual briefing.

In the briefing, the city officials presented various studies from recent years that focus on the area's development. Apparently, the aim was to give the impression that the area is getting a lot of attention from the city's authorities. The open discussions started after the current plans in concern were presented. Because the plans were only preliminary, however, the city officials could not respond to concrete questions that seemed essential to the resident: which buildings are to be demolished, from which buildings will residents have to move and when will all this happen? While the city officials were keen to get information about people's wishes for future buildings, there seemed to be a lack of means to get this sort of conversation going. Despite the public briefing and local media discussions about the demolition of apartment blocks, the city received little feedback on the draft plan from residents.

Political and practical notions

Like the concept of the right to the city, many of the observations done in the two empirical cases concern the political dimension of planning participation. If the right to the city is considered to be 'like a cry and a demand … formulated as a transformed and renewed *right to urban life*' (Lefebvre 1996: 158), or as a way to fight the problems of neoliberalism (Purcell 2002), the case material reveals a need for suitable tools. Although current participation practices are intended to make decision making transparent and responsive to inhabitants' viewpoints, a large part of the decisions are still made outside of the participation process (Hentilä 2012: 59-60). We have also seen that there might be a need for measurements to involve vulnerable population in the process. Moreover, the intention to attract more affluent people to the areas is likely to undermine the interests of the current inhabitants in the areas. The 'renoviction'[2] of the current residents may cause involuntary moves by way of displacement, and immigrant families are particularly targeted due to the city authorities' idea of social balance. People of immigrant background who are in a relatively weak position in their housing career and at the labour market might be dependent on the resources of their ethnic or religious communities (Haapajärvi 2012; Tomlins et al 2002). From the residents' perspectives, therefore, attempts to break segregation

may instead break social ties that are important for everyday life.

Purcell (2002: 104) discusses question whether the rights to decision-making should be differentiated at sub-urban scales in order to give neighbourhood residents a greater say in decisions concerning their local environment. This is a much debated issue, given the fact that many changes in cities affects not only local residents but also other parts of the city or region. Local residents might be most influenced by changes in their neighbourhood, and they might also have more qualified opinions on local matters than external people. Yet, more authority to local residents might also work against the benefit of certain sub-populations as well as other parts of the city. For example, in relatively affluent neighbourhoods that are more inclined to resistance (Kopomaa 2005: 11), the inhabitants might use their right to exclude low-income housing from their area, and reinforce residential segregation (Purcell 2002: 104).

Boer and de Vries (2009: 1322-1333) distinguish between the right to the city as an individual right in the present structures of liberal democracy, on the one hand, and a permanent collective political struggle leading to more radical approaches on the other. While emphasising that the original concept favours the former, they underline that the two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, they might contradict one another, at least potentially, when there are conflicting interests involved. For instance, when city officials want to improve an area to make it more attractive, the displacement of the original inhabitants in the name of common good seems to imply a violation of their individual right. In a case of owner occupied housing, private property ownership would give a strong protection to the inhabitants, whereas people living in social housing would lack such protection. If the right to the city is intended to question private ownership, as Purcell (2002: 103) puts it, the rejection of individual rights in this sort of situation seems to be at odds with the concept.

Though urban planning and design are grounded on democratic principles and have far-reaching political implications, a large part of everyday professional practices are executed outside political processes in order to get things done. Nevertheless, there seems to be an urgent need for developing better ways of communicating about urban development with residents. The city of Espoo seems to acknowledge this need, given their decision to co-fund a project that aims to create new communication and participation methods in urban neighbourhoods. The project, which is organised by Laurea University of Applied Sciences, involves open workshops for residents and other local actors where they discuss issues of physical as well as social environment[3]. These workshops and the ones that I organised as part of my research project both suggest that the largest practical problem the organisers face is to get marginalised populations engaged in the process, particularly people of immigrant background. Although most people invited to the workshop sessions expressed their interest and seemed capable of participating in the discussions, the majority remained absent. The case material indicates that residents who have suffered great personal loses in their lives, and whose current situation is greatly affected by everyday struggles, are willing to talk about their everyday needs and wishes when asked face-to-face in the interviews, but they are not likely to take part in public sessions.

[…] One of the women tells me that she is in a bad situation: her father has just died. I ask where it happened, she responds in Iran. She tells that her mother died in 2009, and she has been away for so long, for 19 years. I ask whether she has relatives here, she answers no. Tears start rising in her eyes.

[…] We speak more about the importance of common spaces in residential areas. Many of the women claim that it is a bad thing to just stay inside the apartment. An Iranian woman says she misses places for women's sports. It is important to get some exercise, otherwise you get depressed, she says. […] Another woman mentions on several occasions the importance of spaces for teaching: mathematics, languages, Finnish and English. Later, she tells she used to be a history teacher in Iraq. But for her, the wish – which she repeats several times – is to stay at home, or return there after the renovations. She says she doesn't like changes. Other women suggest that she could protest by locking herself in, as a protest. They all laugh at the idea. […]
(Field diary notes from a design workshop in Suvela area).

I would argue that there is a need for actors who seek out ways to engage with people in their neighbourhoods and gather information about the inhabitants' needs, wishes and problems. This kind of information is crucial in order to make planning participation compatible with the right to the city. This perspective has been brought up newly also in the Suvela project that has started a new phase after a couple of years break, suggesting that in the process it could have relevance also for urban government that otherwise has difficulties trying to draw investments to problematic suburban areas.

Architecture of the inhabitant

The concept of the right to the city, considered as a new mode of decision-making, touches upon several aspects of participatory planning and design. The general ethos of changing focus from the interests of private ownership to the needs of individuals and communities living in the environment is characteristic of both participatory planning and the right to the city. Participatory practices, particularly in community architecture, have been considered largely from perspectives that emphasise the process of development instead of the end-products. This is considered to form a significant difference between participatory design and conventional end-product-led architecture (Jenkins et al 2010: 26-27). But if we conceive of the end-products – the material spaces in built environment – as inseparable parts of social space, then they should also be the centre of attention when we discuss the conditions for the right to the city. The question thus arises: What might an architecture for the right to the city be like?

Wates and Knevitt (1987, cited in Jenkins et al 2010: 28-30) point out some crucial differences between participatory community architecture and conventional architecture. Many of the differences concern the roles of the parties in the process, but they also point to some features of the end-product. Community architecture is likely to be multifunctional, contextual and regional, with concern for identity, whereas conventional architecture is more likely to serve single functions, and have a self-conscious concern about style. The physical structure of community architecture is expected to be flexible, slowly improving, easy to manage and maintain, and it is motivated by improvements of quality of life for individuals and communities. Conventional architecture is considered more static, and its main motivations are found in the return on investment, in political opportunism and in esteem from professional peers (Wates and Knevitt 1987, cited in Jenkins et al 2010: 28-30). The differences in this juxtaposition are polarised in order to show advantages for community architecture, but they are instructive insofar as they echo

the spirit of the right to the city and shed light on the Varissuo and Suvela cases.

The people who participated in the Varissuo and Suvela workshops presented their imaginations of a future environment that was multifunctional and flexible, facilitating different spatial changes. They also saw the changes and spatial solutions in the environment as a potential source of identity and pride for the local community.

M: […] that women will come to this kind of shared spaces, there must be confidence. It's like a project, which requires time. […] It requires cooperation with all immigrants. And I think it's like a project where cities involvement is required, to develop the project. […] About these shared spaces, a community itself will begin to build co-operation with the native population, and employment […] because women spend a lot of time at home, they pretty much mutually help each other. Sister H told of a small group of ten women with immigrant background who used to meet up. Most of them got jobs, some got access to education, and only a few have not moved on yet. But they are part of this society. It requires a lot of cooperation.
H: These kinds of places for immigrants are needed. You need a place that feels like you belong to the place, so that there is no one falling in between. […] there is really a lot of young people who feel that they are not part of Finnish society or their own community […] there should be a place where one can go and where would be people who have similar experiences. So you could relate to that and strengthen the sense of identity. […]
(A conversation in a workshop)

The concept of the right to the city highlights the role of inhabitants, but also the role of professionals should be taken into account. Staffans (2012) advocates participatory urban planning as a continuous learning process, where multilateral discussions between different parties would be facilitated by professional expertise and a variety of datasets. In the background of visionary discussions and planning processes, information from inhabitants would be gathered constantly to an accumulating inhabitant dataset (Staffans 2012: 65-66). Also Purcell (2002: 102) points out that Lefebvre does not make it clear that decisions that produce urban space should be made entirely by inhabitants, only that the inhabitants' role must be central and direct. The design practices of architecture of the inhabitant should attempt to find radical ways to produce spaces that enable everyday practices emanating from the social, cultural and ethnic differences in the city. They should also acknowledge use value over exchange value to create spatial affordances that enable spatial appropriation. Spaces should be organised according to the cultural models of the society (Stanek: 81-87). The community workshop sessions in Varissuo and Suvela suggest that Lefebvre's to-and-fro dialogue between social life and spatial representations could bring forth previously unutilised potentials for democratic urban development. However, the resources of city officials seem to be insufficient when it comes to creating and maintaining contacts with the local inhabitants.

Conclusions

The above analysis of two Finnish suburban areas has drawn attention to the relationship between regeneration processes informed by ideas of participatory practices and design, on the one hand, and Lefebvre's concept of the right to the city, on the other.

Lefebvre's concept has been interpreted as advocating a new urban politics of the inhabitant (Purcell 2002) which would radically change the system of urban democracy by reorienting decision-making away from the state and questioning the power of private ownership. Participatory objectives in Finnish planning policy seem to reflect similar ideas. In reality, however, many decisions are made outside of the democratic planning process (Staffans 2012: 68), leading to situations where community dialogue is used to legitimate given planning ideas, or the inhabitants are asked for their opinions too late to influence the process. In some cases, there is also insufficient information about the defining conditions.

Lefebvre's original concept was developed during political and spatial struggles in France in the late 1960s. However, it seems pertinent to ask, as does Stanek (2011: 2), whether the concept has turned into a mere slogan in today's society, considering the way the ideas of inhabitant participation and quality of life conflict with the neoliberal governance policies aiming to economic urban vitality and appropriate social mixing in urban regeneration cases. Boer and de Vries (2009: 1322-1333) take collective political struggle to be the favourable contexts for the right to the city, which is at odds with the depoliticised governance discourse. Nevertheless, when only a handful of people voice their concerns, the decision-making process seems to lack democratic legitimacy. The case material also suggests that the collective right to change the city might run counter to the individual right to a home. This conflict challenges the ethos of the politics of inhabitants (Purcell 2002), which afford rights also to inhabitants who are not home owners. The concept does not seem to offer solutions to this kind of dilemma.

Personal abilities and willingness to participate in decision making may favour home owners at the cost of tenants' right to the city (see Kopomaa 2005: 11), and it may facilitate a politics of social mixing that sustains patterns of segregation rather than breaking them (see Vaattovaara & Kortteinen 2012: 61). For immigrant populations, eviction due to renovation (or 'renoviction') might entail permanent displacement from the neighbourhood, and can be harmful to the individuals (see Haapajärvi 2012) as well as reinforcing structures of ethnic and racial marginalisation. On the contrary, the grassroots perspectives from the case areas seem to indicate that investments in spatial improvements that take into account the inhabitants' needs and wishes might benefit underprivileged inhabitants, prevent urban decay and eventually mitigate spatial differentiation (see Skifter Andersen: 159). To overcome some of the contingencies in the task, there is a dilemma of engaging with inhabitants so that the quality of environment could be appreciated also by those who do not participate – the interviewed planners and designers experienced this as their primary role as professionals in the process. Yet the professional attempt to foster 'common good' as premises of equality may work as an obstacle for the ideals of the right to the city, and as a stronghold for prevailing neoliberal ideals (see Mäenpää et al 2000: 39-41, 173-176).

Lefebvre's (1991) concept of social space indicates that processes and end-products should not be taken as separate entities, but as inseparable parts of social space. Moreover, his emphasis on the close relationship between social life and concrete urban space suggests that the right to the city is not a mere political ethos, but should be seen as a radical democratic practice aimed at creating actual change in urban space. This leads us to the notion of *architecture of the inhabitant*, which emphasises the inter-connection between open participatory process and end-products. The case material highlights the importance of creating new ways for communicating about social and architectural urban development, as a to-and-fro refection between spatial representations and lived space, as outlined by Lefebvre. It is clear that architecture alone cannot create radical changes in urban life, but it has a great impact on housing, services, quality of the environment and, eventually, spatial differentiation. To improve the areas for the benefit of the inhabitants, attention should be redirected away from neoliberal targets of rising property values and commercial areal competition boosted by architectural representations to participatory practices that acknowledge local social processes, not to mention architecture that can open spatial potentials for the right to the city.

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Notes

1. For example the city of Turku is planning to build a new tram line to Varissuo, which would open potentials for developing the currently underdeveloped central part of the area.
2. 'Renoviction', an eviction of current residents as a result of rampant rent increases induce by value-adding renovations, see Skanby 2014: 25-26.
3. Laure research project: see Lund & Juujärvi 2015.

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