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"I KNOW I DON'T BELONG HERE BUT I'M JUST USING THIS SPACE AND TRYING TO BE INVISIBLE"

Experiences of fear and exclusion in the urban space of Helsinki by homeless women

ABSTRACT

Saana Koivisto: *"I know I don't belong here but I'm just using this space and trying to be invisible"*
— Experiences of fear and exclusion in the urban space of Helsinki by homeless women

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Women are statistically more afraid of using the urban space than men. The way women use the urban space encloses power relations within the society. Women experiencing homelessness are marginalized in the reference group of women and also in the reference group of people experiencing homelessness. Women's homelessness is inherently different from that of men's; women's homelessness is less studied and therefore the phenomen is harder to grasp.

This thesis aims to study how women without homes perceive the urban space. It mirrors how geography of fear forms for women without homes. Using ethnographic methods this thesis studies the relationship between the urban space and women's homelessness, taking into account the several interconnected issues having an effect on it. Special focus is given to fear and security within the urban space.

Results of the study show how differently the urban space of Helsinki unfolds for women without homes. Surviving and finding a place to sleep were the most important things for women experiencing homelessness. Fear did not form for the women experiencing homelessness in the same way as the theory suggests. Places of fear were found to be also vastly different to women experiencing homelessness.

Keywords: Homelessness, women, gender, urban space, ethnography, urban conflicts, fear

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

List of abbreviations:

FEANTSA   European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless

NIMBY   Not In My Backyard

UN   United Nations

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1. Introduction

Women's security in the urban space has become a topical issue as a young woman was killed in the United Kingdom in the early spring of 2021 while she was walking home at night. As the news broke, the murder generated a lot of discussion in the social media. A post stating "text me when you get home" can be seen in different platforms with the caption stating that women are so used to being afraid of walking home alone that they automatically ask their friends to text them when they get home. Women around the world have shared this text in their social media platforms. This has brought women's safety on the streets into the public discussion once again.

These violent attacks can act as a reminder to women that they are not supposed to use certain places. Women's use of the urban space can reveal power dynamics in the society. With women not using certain places, these spaces become more masculinized. The more masculinized the places get, the less women use them.[1] Women's fear of violent crime exclude them from using certain places. Women's fear of violent crime has in the past been seen as a result of "women's physical vulnerability" but feminist geographers have argued that women's fear works as a spatial expression of patriarchy where the space produces and reproduces traditional views over women's roles.[2]

Same processes are happening with different groups in the urban space. The idea of the city as an unsafe environment makes people use certain places less and using those places more where there are people within their own reference group.[3] In this way attitudes, prejudices, media and existing knowledge of the safety of a space shapes who uses it. This makes urban spaces the arena of everyday conflicts where struggles over space are held. Urban conflicts live in the urban spaces and in the negotiations over who gets to use the public and the urban space.

While women's feelings of insecurity in the public space has been vastly researched, there is not that much research on how women living a displaced life navigate the urban space. In this thesis I study how women experiencing homelessness perceive the urban space. While women with homes may see

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[1] Koskela, 1999, 2.
[2] Pain, 1997, 1.
[3] Berking et al., 2006, pp. 9-10.

certain places in the urban space as scary or uninviting, women without homes do not have the same options when using the urban space. They do not enjoy the autonomy that a home, a place of your own, brings. They have restrictions on where to find safety within the city. Researching how women experiencing homelessness see the city can reveal a lot about the urban space.

Hille Koskela has studied where and how Finnish women are afraid. She has conducted interviews and used several statistics to form an understanding over how women perceive the urban space of Helsinki and how they use it. By using Hille Koskela's geography of fear as a theoretical framework this thesis explores whether or not women experiencing homelessness perceive the urban space in the same way as the women that have homes and enjoy the autonomy that it brings. I test the theory against the experiences of women that have experienced homelessness in their life. I do this by conducting thematic interviews and by attending two street tours led by women that have experienced homelessness.

This thesis extends itself to a range of fields as well as range of topics. The thesis lives on the intersection of urban studies and homelessness research. It aims to provide information on homelessness as a phenomen as well as the urban space of Helsinki. It also discusses gendered experiences, security and fear. The binding factor is intersectionality which carries this thesis from start to finish. Intersectionality is an important notion when discussing women's homelessness as homeless women can struggle with being faced as a drug-user or as an intimate partner violence victim as well as as homeless.

1.1. Homelessness

The UN describes homelessness as one of the crudest manifestations of poverty, discrimination and inequality.[4] Homelessness can reveal demerits in the society as people experiencing homelessness are in a very vulnerable position.

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[4] United Nations, department of Economic and Social Affairs, website. Retrieved from
https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/social/58-session-commission-for-social-development.html

Prolonged homelessness is often associated with men. This is not because women do not experience homelessness but rather because women's homelessness is often hidden.[5] Hidden homelessness means that women are living with friends and family or with temporary partners and therefore they are not visible in homelessness statistics. This makes women's homelessness harder to study. While there are studies regarding the insecurity of men living on the streets, there isn't much information on women's insecurity while homeless. For example Finnish institute for health and welfare has conducted a study with 617 homeless men and 1240 men with homes and found that in the 10-year period 45 percent of the homeless men died compared to 10.5 percent that died in the other group.[6] This means that homeless men die five times more likely compared to those that have homes.

Same kind of data does not exist on homeless women in Finland. The lack of data is very telling. While we know that women's homelessness exists, it's harder to grasp. Homeless women are unattainable from the traditional point of view of homelessness analysis. If the core belief is that a homeless person lives on the streets, we might not see many homeless women in the statistics. However, if our idea of who is homeless is expanded, it is possible to see how diverse of a group people experiencing homelessness are.

Homelessness research has in the last years developed to notice how heterogenous of a group people experiencing homelessness are. Yet, still, many policies are made to answer the needs of those seen as the most traditional faces of homelessness: men living on the streets. While strives have been made to shed light on how many women are homeless, there is still not enough knowledge produced on how hugely LGBTQIA+ community is affected by homelessness and the vulnerability homelessness poses for them.

1.2. Finnish context

Finland is known for its ground-breaking work on homelessness and major steps have been taken in order to tackle the issue. Even in an international context Finland is known for its ability to reduce homelessness when in many other countries the situation is worsening.

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[5] Mayock et al., 2015, 880.
[6] Stenius-Ayoade et al., 2019, 1092.

In 2019 the American newspaper Guardian ran an article called "'It's a miracle': Helsinki's radical solution to homelessness". The article discussed how Finland had been able to critically reduce homelessness in the recent years. The article also discussed the merits of Finland's Housing First model.[7] In their article 'How Finland ended homelessness' Shinn and Khadduri present the same trends where Finland has been able to reduce homelessness in a time where it is growing in other parts of Europe. Shinn and Khadduri credit the reduction of homeless in Finland to the Housing First program and generally better social welfare.[8] European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) states in their report that "Evidence from across Europe points to a worsening homelessness situation. Finland is the only exception, showing the effectiveness of implementing a long-term homelessness strategy."[9]

Major strives for ending homelessness have been made in Finland and there has been special focus on women's homelessness in recent years. The government has declared it aims to halve homelessness by 2023 and eliminate it completely by 2027.[10]

Finland is in the phase where there has been major development in the field of homelessness work but several steps need to be taken to achieve the government's goal to eliminate homelessness completely. Eliminating homelessness means that there needs to be clear notions as to who counts as homeless and how homelessness is defined. Eliminating homelessness will also need an understanding on the intersectionality of homelessness as a phenomen. This especially has to do with women's homelessness as women can be invisible in homelessness research due to its inherently different nature.

Women often fall outside of homelessness research because of how homelessness is defined. Women who lose their homes due to intimate partner violence are often seen and researched as "victims of domestic violence" rather than as homeless. Because of this women are invisible in the homelessness statistics and therefore policies do not respond to their needs. This also makes women's pathways through homelessness unseen. The research on homelessness pathways creates information through which policies are made and therefore women's housing pathways can be left invisible and

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[7] Henley, 2019.

[8] Khadduri & Shinn, 2020, pp. 76-77.

[9] Feantsa, Europe and homelessness, 2017. Retrieved from https://www.feantsa.org/download/europe-and-homelessness-alarming-trends3178124453170261721.pdf [read 3/2021].

[10] Valtioneuvosto website, retrieved from https://valtioneuvosto.fi/marinin-hallitus/hallitusohjelma/asuntopolitiikka

misunderstood. As gender-based violence is a major reason for women's homelessness, there is a need for deeper understanding on how violence changes women's housing trajectories.

Special focus has been granted to women's homelessness in Finland. Riikka Haahtela has argued in her dissertation on homeless women's clienthoods that the women-specific homelessness work progressed in major way in the start of the millennia. In 2000 the first women's supportive housing unit opened. After that there have been several other projects and operating models that focus on women's homelessness.[11] A women-specific NEA project (2018-2020) was funded by STEA and coordinated by Y-Foundation. Its main goal was to remove women's homelessness by securing their housing pathways.[12] This means that Finland has already taken steps to identify women's homelessness as a separate issue that requires different policies and intersectional understanding of the phenomena.

According to the Housing Finance and Development Center of Finland women made 25 percent of the homeless in 2020.[13] This means that a quarter of the homeless people in Finland belongs to the reference group of women which means that there is need for more information on women's homelessness pathways in order to create policies that help with the government's goal to end homelessness in 2027.

While there has been a vast amount of research regarding women's homelessness in Finland, the research is often conducted from the field of sociology where a major emphasis lays on reasons behind homelessness, policies and services. This thesis aims to take a different approach by researching how the urban space is seen by women experiencing homelessness. Special focus is given to security, fear, exclusion and production of space.

Granfeldt's study *Kokemuksia naisten kodittomuudesta (Experiences of the homeless women),* 1998, sheds a light to the everyday lives of homeless women. She explains the experiences of homeless women while homeless. Her study is conducted from the point of view of social services ant the knowledge is produced to form a very broad picture of women's experiences as homeless. Her study

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[11] Haahtela, 2015, pp. 31-32.

[12] Sininauhasäätiö website, retrieved from https://www.sininauhasaatio.fi/toimintamme/asumisen-tuki-ja-neuvonta/nea-naiserityisyys-asunnottomuustyossa/

[13] ARA, Asunnottomat 2020, retrieved from https://www.ara.fi/fi-FI/Tietopankki/Tilastot_ja_selvitykset/Asunnottomuus/Asunnottomat_2020(59753).

does discuss some of the same topics as this thesis, but the point of view is very different as Granfeldt studies the homelessness experience as a whole and discusses widely issues such as identity, motherhood, substance abuse and violence. Granfeldt's work has created a platform for further research on homeless women in Finland.

1.3. The urban space of Helsinki

Urban space has been studied in several fields. Urban space of Helsinki has been studied from the point of view of street prostitution[14], NIMBY[15] and from the point of view of architectural and economic strives. The fear of crime is annually studied by the police barometer.

Conflicts and power over urban space are not very much researched in the context of Helsinki. Panu Lehtovuori studies the conflicts over urban space in their dissertation 'Experience and conflict – The dialectics of the production of public urban space in the light of new event venues in Helsinki 1993-2003'. However, while Lehtovuori studies the urban space of Helsinki, Lehtovuori's research looks at urban space from the point of view of architecture and urban planning. While studying architectural choices can reveal different dimensions of the society, this thesis has a different point of view where the urban space is looked at as a whole without special lens on architectural choices.

Hille Koskela has most vastly studied the urban space of Helsinki from the point of view of experienced security. Therefore Koskela's work is the most prominent starting point for this thesis that aims to research how a marginalized group experiences the urban space.

Therefore this thesis hits a point that has not been studied yet in the context of Helsinki. While homelessness has been vastly researched in Finland, the security and views over urban space has been very little researched. It aims to provide new information of the urban space of Helsinki. Exploring how women experiencing homelessness navigate the urban space could provide new information on the urban space of Helsinki.

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[14] See Tani, 2001.
[15] See Eranti, 2017. NIMBY references to the phenomen of Not In My Backyard.

1.4. Intersectionality

As mentioned before, intersectionality is a major theme in this thesis. Intersectionality was introduced in the late 1980s to expose how single-axis thinking undermined the struggles for social justice. Intersectionality introduced the study of dynamics between interlapping categories, such as gender, race and other axes of power and in the decades following has introduced itself to variety of fields, such as organizational studies and geography.[16] Intersectionality presents a way of seeing overlaps in one's identity. It offers a lens though which it is possible to see how for example women are belonging to several groups and possess several identities.

For women experiencing homelessness different identities are composed of belonging to a reference group of the homeless and being women. They also have several other intersecting and overlapping identities. As women experiencing homelessness fall into many categories, intersectionality is needed to understand women's homelessness and gender-based violence. Homeless women often face psychosocial problems such as drug abuse or mental health issues which need to be taken into account when discussing women's homelessness.[17] Therefore homeless women can struggle with being faced as a drug-user or as an intimate partner violence victim which pose stronger identities for women than "being homeless". Crenshaw argues that where systems of race, gender and class domination coincide, intervention strategies based on experiences of women who do not share the same obstacles, are of no help.[18]

Women experiencing homelessness are situated in many intersections as they do not only have different experiences from women with homes and different backgrounds, but they also live in the world of homelessness, where women form a minority and the homelessness world has not been built for them. These issues become visible within housing services, gender-based violence policies, social services and the urban space. Mayock et al., have argued that prolonged homelessness is often associated with men and that explorations of long-termed homelessness have usually reflected the experiences of men. As a consequence, women's trajectories through homelessness are not well captured in the published literature.[19]

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[16] Sumi Cho et al., 2013, 3.
[17] Bretherton, 2017, 5.
[18] Crenshaw, 1991, 1246.
[19] Mayock et al., 2015, pp. 879-881.

Feminist geographer Gill Valentine has argued that intersectionality has gotten surprisingly little attention in geography. Valentine argues that feminism emerged in geography to challenge the lack of women as research subjects as well as the lack of women as professionals in the field. British geographers wrote a book "Gender and geography" to demonstrate how to make women more central to geography. In the following decade strives were made to add women to the research agendas. With this development, there was a notion that "women" were made central to the subject, yet intersectionality was still scarce.[20] Peter Hopkins has argued, too, that geography has omitted intersectionality, thus leading to reproduction of geography as white, racist and colonialist.[21]

Valentine states that intersectionality offers a new challenge for geography. While oppressive structures are very much embedded in space and traditional feminist geography with focus on social structures of patriarchy, heteronormativity and so on still are needed, there needs to be a thought of multiple categories involved. Valentine argues that one should not overlook how deeply space is power-laden and how it can be oppressive. Valentine argues that intersectionality overemphasizes the abilities of individual without taking into account that spaces hold great power with spatial orderings and their ability to produce exclusion.[22]

This thesis too participates on the discussions on intersectionality in geography and in peace research. I use Koskela's framework on geography of fear as theoretical framework. Koskela's geography of fear focuses on women as a categorical whole. Women's geography of fear is in this thesis tested and stretched to see how it answers to the call of intersectionality by implementing it to the experiences of women experiencing homelessness.

1.5. Research questions and the outline of the thesis

The research questions have been developed from the theory used in the thesis. By answering these research questions, this thesis will form a comprehend understanding on how the urban space of Helsinki unfolds for women experiencing homelessness, with special focus on security. The

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[20] Valentine, 2007, 11.
[21] Hopkins, 2019, 937.
[22] Valentine, 2007, 19.

geography of fear is tested throughout the thesis and acts as a mirror against which homeless women's perceptions over urban space are perceived.

1. How security and fear are formed in the urban space for women experiencing homelessness?
2. How women experiencing homelessness perceive and use the urban space?
3. Can the geography of fear approach be applied to women living a displaced life?

The thesis is divided into five parts: introduction, methodology, theory, analysis and conclusion. The introduction has so far introduced the areas that this thesis covers: homelessness, study of urban space, intersectionality and gendered experiences of space and the research questions.

The methodology part of this thesis will cover the methods used. It presents the approach of mobile ethnography and thematic interviews used. It presents the street tours and the routes taken in the tours. In the methodology part I will discuss some ethical issues that the topic involves as well as my own positionality.

The theory part will introduce the readers to geography of fear and how it perceives the urban space. The theory part will discusses the several aspects there are to fear in the urban space. It also discusses how fear is formed in the urban space. Academic discussions over the urban space are presented in the theory section.

In the analysis section I will combine the knowledge gathered from the mobile ethnographies as well as thematic interviews to present a coherent picture on how women experiencing homelessness perceive the urban space and whether or not the geography of fear approach applies to their experiences. The analysis is followed by brief conclusion section in which I will explain the limitations of the study as well as go over the most prominent research results.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Introduction

This thesis leans on Hille Koskela's work on the study of fear. Koskela has studied how, where and why Finnish people are afraid. For this Koskela uses the framework of *geography of fear.* By implementing the theory of geography of fear Koskela has studied the fear experienced by women in Helsinki. She has studied women's experiences in urban space and gender-specific experiences that arouse fear. Koskela argues that gendered fear is related to power; women's feelings of fear are a product of how space is controlled by different groups at different times.[23]

While Koskela has studied the experiences of women in general, this thesis studies experiences of the urban space by women who have experienced homelessness in their life. This thesis challenges Koskela's work and geography of fear and studies how the theory works with a marginalized group occupying the urban space. Implementing the theoretical framework of geography of fear to women living a displaced life can reveal demerits within the urban space.

Koskela understands geography as socially and theoretically informed science which is studying human spatiality and develops an understanding of space. Koskela argues that personally experienced space is also socially produced and "the experience of space" is affiliated with power relations.[24] This thesis leans on Koskela's take on geography of fear.

Koskela has argued that conflicts are urbanizing. Wars and war-like effort are happening more and more in the cities. Cities are also affected by the threat of terrorism. Cities prepare for the threat of terrorism by adding more regulation and surveillance, seemingly making the cities more secure.[25] Space is often linked to these reactions that follow from fear: social separation, marginalization of groups and other displays of power are made concrete in the urban space.[26].

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[23] Koskela, 1999, pp. 5-6.
[24] Koskela, 1999, pp. 6-7.
[25] Koskela, 2009, 61.
[26] Koskela, 2009, 78.

2.2. Urban conflicts

Pierce & Martin argue that Henri Lefebvre' proposed theory of social space in 1974 has been vastly used in the field of geography to understand the urban life. Lefebvre acknowledges space as socially produced and his work has been widely used guiding the urban and political critique.[27] Lefebvre's notions work as the base for the discussion of the urban space as more than just its physical shape. Cities are affected by social relations which shape the urban space. The notion of city as the marker of social life has sparked discussions over urban inequalities. Relations of inequality produce and reproduce cities and the urban life.[28] The urban conflicts become visible in the urban space as cities can work as an arena for inequalities and social disparities.

Koskela argues that in many discussions the socially produced space is only understood in relation to political or macro-economic social practices. Koskela's work takes into account that feelings and emotions also contribute to the process of producing space. Individual's use of space is not based on free choice but is a product of social power relations. Koskela understand the space itself as a social construct. This is in Koskela's mind is important when studying fear. Fear of crime modifies the spatial realities for women and at the same time space is affected by women's fear of crime.[29] In this regard, Koskela moves further from Lefebvre's socially produced space and into the physical, social and spatial manifestations over women's fear and how the fear then shapes the space.

The conflicts over urban space can manifest themselves in many ways. One persistent academic discussion has been the "right to the city" discussion which also originates from Lefebvre's thinking. Kuymulu argues that Lefebvre saw the urban space as a political space and noted that all of its habitants should have a right to involve themselves in the political and urban life.[30] Jabareen argues that Lefebvre's "right to the city" term has become a symbol and an ideal for human rights in cities. It has been used vastly as a framework for understanding inequalities within cities. However, Jabareen concludes that the term itself is abstract, leaving academics with little assistance in moving forward.[31]

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[27] Pierce & Martin, 2015, 1279.
[28] Tonkiss, 2013, 8.
[29] Koskela, 1999, 3.
[30] Kuymulu, 2013, 925.
[31] Jabareen, 2014, pp. 135-136.

Koskela looks at the urban conflicts through pursuits for security. Koskela claims that the feelings of insecurity might be a bigger social issue than the actual, statistical risk of being a victim of violence.[32] Pursuits for security are done to prevent fear in the urban space. Koskela believes that the aims for security are seen as inevitable in the urban planning. There is such a strong consensus that people wish for security in the urban space, that policies aimed to prevent fear and insecurity are rarely questioned. All means that are meant to aim for more security, are accepted.[33]

Koskela argues that in the name of security, the urban space is banned from marginalized groups. Fear leads to the thinking that the criminal is inherently different from myself which leads to the processes of othering.[34] This means that people perceive people different from you as potential threat to their safety. Koskela argues that space works as a battlefield where different groups fight over space physically and symbolically. However, Koskela argues that fear needs to be separated to its own aspect as experienced fear may not have anything to do with actual risk of being a victim of a crime. Koskela argues that the pursuits for security is also tied to the use of power; by aiming for security, one can justify different spatial positions.[35]

Fear is largely discussed within geography and urban politics. Fear is a powerful political tool as fear can be used to influence nefarious territorial politics. Fear can be used as a catalyst to create and reinforce divisions between communities.[36] According to Koskela, fear is an important element in urban conflicts. It can be used as the driver for hostility towards different groups.[37] Fear can direct legislation and regulation and control over of public space. Fear can modify urban planning.[38] In some regard, Koskela's work and this thesis continue the discussion of right to the city by not asking who has the right to the city but by asking who has the right to the security and who's security is increased with policies and urban planning.

Koskela understands fear as a part of a larger problem and that fear should be regarded as its relation to social power relations. Insecurity can be seen as related to inequalities and polarization in societies.[39]

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[32] Koskela, 2009, 105.
[33] Koskela, 2009, pp. 32-33.
[34] Koskela, 2009, 18.
[35] Koskela, 2009, pp. 38-41.
[36] Shirlow & Pain, 2003, 22.
[37] Koskela, 2010, 399.
[38] Koskela, 2010, 403.
[39] Koskela, 2000, 392.

2.3. Urban geographies of fear

According to Hille Koskela fear is "a truly personal emotion which both reflects social relations and has influence on them". Koskela argues that from an individual perspective fear is pure emotion, but there are different aspects to fear that affect how it's produced and how it manifests itself.[40] For individuals, fear can manifest itself by shaping their mental maps and therefore how they use the urban space. The individual's mental maps of fear are formed through media, unpleasant encounters, shared knowledge and other factors having to do with how fear is formed for an individual.[41]

In this thesis I will discuss especially the *fear of crime*. Fear of crime contains the fear of violence or sexual exploitation. Several notions have been made as to how fear of crime should be defined. In their article 'The only thing we have to fear is fear itself... and crime' Henson et al., define fear of crime as "an emotional response to a danger or threat of an actual or potential criminal incident".[42] Ceccato and Yates, however, argue that the most successful definitions for fear of crime are those that appreciate the way in which fear of crime constrains everyday life.[43] Timo Korander argues that the fear of crime is mostly derived from indirect information, one that is gotten from the media. Crime news highlight certain cases thus creating a distorted image on criminal activity. These images presented in the media invade our everyday thought processes and model them accordingly.[44] Women report consistently higher fear of crime than men. This is considered to be due to women facing harassment and assaults (by men).[45]

England and Simon argue that fear is used to influence public policies and urban (re)development. These "fear discourses" are aimed to make changes in the urban space.[46] One example of such practice is the notion of "designing out fear". Designing out fear has been a topic of discussion in geography. Designing out fear means that urban planning would take into account the experienced fear in the urban space and try to help it with design that reduces fear, such as better lightning. The idea of

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[40] Koskela, 2010, pp. 389-392.
[41] England & Simon, 2010, 202.
[42] Henson et al., 2015, 92.
[43] Ceccato & Yates, 2020, 278.
[44] Korander in Niemelä & Lahikainen, 2000, pp. 177-180.
[45] Ceccato & Yates, 2020, 279.
[46] England and Simon, 2010, 203.

designing out fear is derived from Newman's idea of defensible space[47]. The school of thought on defensible space is constructed on the idea that the built environment can sustain or prevent crime. The thought of defensible space became popular in the political front and it became a theoretical cornerstone for crime prevention.[48] Koskela, however, dismisses the idea that fear could be simply designed out as fear is so deeply embedded into our social life and fear is embedded in more than just the environment.[49] Koskela also argues that creating a space that feels secure cannot be the same thing as creating a space that aims to maximal crime control.[50] This means that the felt fear should be understood as its own aspect, separate from crime or incidents happening.

2.3.1. Geography of fear

Koskela's work views women's fear and their use of space through its relation to social power relations, not as an isolated matter. Koskela argues that fear and space are intertwined, with one phenomen affecting the other. Koskela explains that fear of violence demonstrates how space is experienced with strong emotion thus making experienced space also socially produced.[51]

The affects fear has on space can be studied with geography of fear. Geography of fear takes into account the spatial dimensions of fear of crime. It acknowledges that there are spatial meanings to how and where people are afraid. Geography of fear affiliates to the development of the study of geography from 'science of surface' to the understanding of meanings of places and spaces.[52]

Within in the study of geography of fear there are several different approaches. The "production of space" approach is based on a particular understanding of space. The approach does not see fear of crime as a private problem of an individual but rather tries to pinpoint the everyday practices that produce fear or undermine it. It also strives to understand the social power relations behind the fear. Research conducted with this approach takes into account the symbolic meanings of space and social relations. The practices in which fear is constructed or deconstructed demonstrate how space is

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[47] Koskela & Pain, 2000, 271.
[48] Reynald & Elffers, 2009, 27.
[49] Koskela, 1999, 2.
[50] Koskela, 2009, 185.
[51] Koskela, 1999, 7.
[52] Koskela, 1999, 2.

produced in social practices. The micro scale approach focuses more on the places of fear. The macro scale approach aims to pinpoint frightening regions.[53] The micro scale approach and production of space approaches are especially used in this thesis as the aim is to understand how the urban space unfolds for the participants and what are underlying causes for how the urban space is formed in their mental maps'.

Testing Koskela's theories on geographies of fear in the urban space of Helsinki against experiences and notions of women experiencing homelessness provides information on whether or not the urban space unfolds differently for those living in a displaced way.

2.3.2. Geography of survival

Geography of survival is a theory that has been used to study constraining structures that prevent the access to basic needs for some groups in the city.[54] Mitchell and Heynen argue that the discussions of the "right to the city" are at the heart of geography of survival. Mitchell and Heynen have studied the homeless' right to the city and their survival in the urban spaces of North America. In their article 'The Geography of Survival and the Right to the City: Speculations on Surveillance, Legal Innovation, and the Criminalization of Intervention' they focus on the rise of automatic surveillance in cities, changes in law and the criminalization of public food giveaways.[55]

While Heynes' and Mitchell's work provides a prominent framework to the study of people experiencing homelessness in the urban space, this thesis will not use it as it's framework. This thesis aims to provide information on the urban space of Helsinki. Heynes' and Mitchell's work is framed to North America. When studying oppressive and exclusive structures, the local history needs to be taken into account. This puts Finland and North America into different reference groups. Mitchell and Heynes are also leaning heavily into local legislation and this too directs this thesis away from their work. While this thesis does not directly lean into the geography of survival, it does participate to the discussions of right to the city and therefore to the geography of survival.

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[53] Koskela, 1999, 2.
[54] See for example McLean, 2012 and Mitchell and Heynen, 2009.
[55] Heynes and Mitchell, 2009, pp. 614-6019.

2.4. Gendered experiences of space

Koskela and Pain discuss feminist ideologies over fear in the urban setting. They distinguish at least two approaches within the feminist tradition of urban studies: one that considers that the built environment is the product of male-centered world and patriarchy is visible within the built environment and other that sees fear as social and political and inevitably embedded within gendered power relations. From the first group rises the thoughts that women's fear could be changed by changing the built environment and by "designing out fear". Koskela argues that women's fear in the urban setting is a much more complex issue and it cannot be changed by simply changing the environment.[56] Koskela argues that women's fear of crime not only derives from experienced crime but is also an indicator for the power-relations women experience within the urban space.[57] According to Koskela, the urban space is produced and then reproduced by everyday practices of women daring or not daring to use the space. Masculinization of space happens through women not using it because of sexual harassment, threat of violence and such practices.[58]

Koskela argues that women's fear is inherently different from men's by its nature and by its effect on women's lives. According to Koskela this is due to the threat of sexual violence, a threat that is not that common amongst men. Koskela argues that gender is one of the biggest factors affecting fear.[59] This Koskela considers to be at the core of the gendered exclusion. Women are not using certain spaces because of the fear of crime and ultimately because of the masculinization of the space.[60]

In Finland and Scandinavia in general women have fairly free mobility compared to some other countries.[61] However, in Finland, women have a relatively high chance of experiencing intimate partner violence. According to the Finnish institute for health and welfare, 31% of Finnish women that were 15 or older had experienced intimate partner violence in their life.[62] This puts Finland into its own frame of reference where there is significant progress made in some areas of gender equality

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[56] Koskela & Pain, 2000, 271.
[57] Koskela, 1999, 302.
[58] Koskela, 1999, 15.
[59] Koskela, 1999, 2.
[60] Koskela, 1999, pp. 15-16.
[61] Koskela, 1999, 302.
[62] Finnish Health Department, retrieved from https://thl.fi/fi/web/sukupuolten-tasa-arvo/tasa-arvon-tila/vakivalta-ja-hairinta/sukupuolistuneen-vakivallan-yleisyys

but the threat of violence is relatively high for women. Women experiencing homelessness are also exposed to various forms of gender-based violence as gender-based violence is the main cause of women's homelessness and also a common outcome of women's homelessness.[63] Women are often homeless due to experienced intimate partner violence and homeless women also face violence while homeless. Women's trajectories through homelessness are often linked to domestic and intimate partner violence.[64]

2.5. The social and physical development of fear

Koskela has argued that women and men are afraid in different spaces. For women these places are deserted areas with few people. In these places it's hard to get help in case something happens. For men being afraid is more common in places such as lines in the hot dog stand or cab lines where they could get in a physical altercation with other men. Koskela has also argued that many women organize their lives in such ways that they don't have to move in parks or city centers at night.[65] Yet, these are places traditionally seen as spaces that homeless people habitat. In my study I aim to define the places that are seen as insecure by homeless women, who don't quite fit in with the reference group of how homelessness is usually seen but who also don't fit to the reference group of those women that have homes.

According to a study conducted in 1994, 44% of women were afraid of walking in the center of the city where they lived on Friday or Saturday night; 32% of felt unsafe and 12% wouldn't go there alone.[66] While the overall sense of security has approved over time, women are still more afraid then men in Helsinki. According to the Security study of Helsinki from 2018, 16 percent of men felt the center of Helsinki to be unsafe on weekend nights. The same percent for women was 31.[67]

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[63] Reid et al., 2020.
[64] Bretherton, 2017, 1.
[65] Koskela, 2009.
[66] Koskela, 1999, 4.
[67] Helsingin turvallisyyskysely, 2018. retrieved from https://www.kvartti.fi/fi/artikkelit/turvallisuustutkimus-helsinkilaisten-turvallisuuden-tunne-kohentunut, read 9/2020.

Koskela argues that fear is also connected to well-being of the individual. People who are most vulnerable often experience most fear. Koskela argues that this could mean that people that face most oppression are the ones that are most afraid. Koskela notes that the marginalized groups that suffer the most oppression are the ones that are most afraid. She uses Flemming Balvig's notion that for those people that have only few resources in life, existential insecurity is easily transformed into fear and that the greater the social isolation is, the stronger the fear of crime is.[68]

Koskela also found that women "being bold" in the city had to do with reasoning the fear away, being courageous because of awareness of how plausible the threat of violence is, taking possession of space by using it frequently and ability to respond sensibly when facing a threat.[69] Koskela also argues that women found safety in other people. They were confident that other people were not a danger to you and therefore found crowded places more safe than empty ones.[70]

For men the places of danger seem to be public spaces where there is a chance to get into a fight (with other men). Women are more likely to be a victim of violence in a private space.[71] While statistically women are more likely to be victims of a crime in a private place, women are generally more afraid in the public. This is the consequence of the socially produced fear. Media, parental warnings, rumors and crime-prevention talks all paint a picture of the public space as unsafe.[72]

Koskela also argues that a space becomes more safe for a person the more they use it. If you often use a space and nothing happens, that gives a positive reassurance that the space is safe. When a person does not use a space, the pictures they have of it are formed by media and stories heard.[73] The decisions to use the space derive from experiences and from the information that is available, rather than some statistics about how likely it is to become a victim of a crime in a certain place.[74] These created texts are a part of how individuals' mental maps' over urban space forms and how the urban space gets used.

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[68] Koskela, 1999, 12.
[69] Koskela, 1999, 304.
[70] Koskela, 1999, 310.
[71] Koskela, 2009, 79.
[72] Koskela, 1999, 304.
[73] Koskela, 1999, 308.
[74] Koskela, 1999, 89.

Experienced insecurity is formed strongly in individual's own life experiences. Feelings of insecurity are linked to structural violence and how different groups are in different positions within the urban space. Fear of crime in the urban environment is often treated as women's problem. However, Koskela sees this having more to do with structural differences; fear mirrors power positions between genders.[75]

Fear can also be negotiated within the individual's perceptions over urban space. Koskela argues that individuals interpret fear and danger in urban space with the ability to read the urban space. They create their own text over how the urban space unfolds for them. Using the urban space means navigating through signs, creating a dialogue of deducted security and insecurity. For some people signs of danger can be guards, for others a group of young people gathered in the city center.[76] These discourses over fear, negotiations over threats and risks, are an essential part of the daily life of individuals.[77] Individuals create their own navigational tools in regard to using the urban space. The navigational tools are formed by the individual's perception over the urban space and the navigation through the urban space also shapes how the space gets used.

In Koskela's study she found out that women that had had violent experiences, had dramatic changes in their feelings towards the urban space. In her research every woman that had experienced violence in the streets was more afraid than before the attack.[78] The fear made women change their relationship to the space. Fear of violence was felt in that exact place where the attack happened or places that reminded it. In addition to street violence, the violence experienced in the private space, could add feelings of insecurity in the public space. For example, people that have experienced intimate partner violence could become more wary of other men as well.[79]

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[75] Koskela, 2009, pp. 35-37.
[76] Koskela, 2009, pp. 35-37.
[77] Koskela, 2000, 393.
[78] Koskela, 1999, 312.
[79] Koskela, 2009, pp. 90-91.

Table 1: Places of fear for women

	Empty	Crowded
Open	Parks, squares, hills	Bus/railway stations, city centres
Closed	Underpasses, bridges, dead end streets, some parks and forests, alleys, staircases	Restaurants, some tunnels, shopping centres, underground stations

From Koskela & Pain, 2000.

Koskela and Pain found that the development of fear has to do with physical as well as social aspects. The social aspect often explains why a certain place is seen as scary or uninviting. If incidents happen in a certain place, it becomes more frightening in the shared stories of women. Seeing in the media or hearing stories of possible attackers lurking in bushes, underpasses, forests and such places make them more frightening for women. In fact, Koskela and Pain found during their interviews with women about frightening places that women rarely mentioned physical aspects of fear without the social aspects.[80] Places become scary or uninviting due to violence, incidents or threats of violence having happened there to women themselves or them having heard about it through stories or through media.

I will not frame my study to just public places as I wish to study the urban space as a whole. There is symbolic value to consider when talking about security and fear as well as several life experiences that alter your way of seeing the urban space. I am interested to see how the city unfolds for these women who are not able to go home to enjoy safety and feeling of autonomy and power.

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[80] Koskela & Pain, 2000, 275.

2.6. The narrowing public space and acts of exclusion

Studying how public space unfolds can reveal how power is distributed in the city. Public space is supposed to be free to anyone; a place where different people meet. However, as cities become more security-oriented, public space changes. It becomes regulated and limited which affects the marginalized people using it. Historically the public space refers to a place of politics and commercial efforts. From the start, the public space has served both the freedom of opinion but also consuming. However, as cities have become more security-oriented, the concept of public space has shifted.[81] Public space refers to something anyone is free to enjoy and still cities go to great lengths to get drug users, alcoholics, youth gangs or the homeless out of the public space.

"Publicity" of the space refers to the act of being able to entry the space no matter who you are. Entering the space requires no passes or registration. Therefore presence in the public space is always anonymous; people present in the public space are strangers to each other. That is what encapsulates the public space: strangers meet each other and human togetherness is reached. However, this is also what makes the public space vulnerable.[82] Not knowing who you encounter together with the unrest towards strangers leads to added fear. Koskela argues that fear needs the "other" thus playing an important role in the process of "othering". Being afraid of an attack in the park late at night means being afraid of *someone else*, the other that is the perpetrator. Fear is directly connected to prejudice, hate and anger. Fear is often learnt and children are taught to be afraid of strangers. Those seen as "deviant" are treated as potential threats instead of being concerned for their wellbeing.[83] Fear has transformed public spaces into controlled places. Several actions are taken to keep people from using the public space; benches are taken out of parks, public restrooms have disappeared from parks etc.[84]

Hughes, Madoc-Jones et al. argue in their article *'A place to call our own: perspectives on the geographical and social marginalisation of homeless people'* that the narrowing of a public space has made the homeless more wary of using it. While the homeless should have the same access to the public space as anyone else, they would be asked to leave by security guards or the police. Some respondents also said that using the public space without a 'legitimate' reason would cause negative

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[81] Koskela, 2009, 41.
[82] Bauman, 2005, pp. 166-167.
[83] Koskela, 2010, pp. 389-403.
[84] Ellin, 2003, pp. 52-53.

comments from other users of the space. For example they would be heckled and told to get a job. Not feeling welcome in a public place was common for many respondents.[85]

These acts of exclusion are done in the name of security. Cities try to gain more security by limiting the use of the public space. They are refusing the space from already marginalized groups that don't necessarily have the resources to go anywhere else. This increases marginalization for these already marginalized groups as their encounters with other parts of society become even more limited. Koskela argues that spatial changes promote social segregation and the idea that there are insiders and outsiders – "the decent people" and "the criminals" or the marginalized ones. When there is a consensus that anyone you face could be of danger to you, people strive to move only in places where there are as many people like them as possible.[86] This is opposite of what the public space was created for. These acts create a safety paradox. As the city is supposedly getting safer for some, it's becoming more discriminatory towards others. Koskela argues that to increase security for some groups means decreasing security for others. Architecture that aims for maximal security is often alienating and exclusive for some.[87]

Marginalization and displacing of people are spatial and social processes. Space correlates with social status. Some people can afford to move freely within the city, even within the world, while "the others" in the society have very few options as to how to use the space and move in it.[88] Studying how homeless women navigate through these processes and structures provides important information on the urban space.

Jock Young has argued that the transformation from modern society to postmodern society means that the underprivileged and the privileged live nearer each other in the urban space. This has led to the privileged drawing boundaries between themselves and "the others". Young sees "the others" as people that are not regarded (from the point of view of the privileged) as external enemies but rather someone that lacks the attributes of the viewer: people who must be socialized and cured to fit our views of those fit into this society.[89]

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[85] Hughes et al., 2017, pp. 108-113
[86] Koskela, 2009, 41.
[87] Koskela, 2010, 403.
[88] Koskela, 2009, 40.
[89] Young, 1999, 5-9.

David Sibley has studied exclusive structures in the societies. Their work is focused on "outsiders" in the urban societies and while Sibley's work is mostly about the travelling roma people, their work on exclusion and social structures work for any study on exclusive structures. Sibley argues that the built environment teaches its users about social and economic relationships. Sibley claims that urban planners reinforce beliefs about the society by building environments that either promote or restrict development. Sibley calls this indirect institutional education.[90] These acts of indirect education about the space form exclusive structures within the urban space. These structures are formed within several different layers and levels of the society.

The narrowing public space holds symbolic value of how the urban space is shifting. Sibley's argument about urban planners doing indirect education on space shows how spaces are produced within the field of urban planning. The acts of exclusion can be subtle, yet they hold great power over cultures forming in the urban areas. As exclusive design, suspicion towards certain groups and pursuits to safety are increased, an urban space turns more inwards and becomes more homogeneous. The more homogeneous a space turns, the more it excludes anyone differing from its residents from using the space. This forms a circle of areas becoming more and more closed. This takes space away from public spaces that enable meetings with different people.

2.7. COVID19

This thesis comes out when it's been a year since COVID19 was declared officially a pandemic. As the interviewees in this thesis have had several years since they experienced homelessness, COVID19 does not appear in the results of this thesis. However, it seems important to mention the pandemic's possible effects on exclusion of cities and fearfulness.

In many studies about geography of fear, 9/11 has been marked a changing point.[91] The threat was now unknown: the enemy was elusive, you could not see it coming. This added fearfulness and surveillance. Security was now a top priority: one that would surpass the rights of the individual. 9/11

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[90] Sibley, 1995, pp. 40-41.
[91] See for example Koskela, 2009 & Ellie, 2003.

opened an Overton's window. What was seen impossible in the past could now be done in the name of *security*. Individual rights were restricted to prevent the unknown enemy.

The same trajectories are now seen with the prevention of COVID19. Individuals are being restricted in a way that did not seem possible before the pandemic in the liberal West. People are told to avoid the public places; the danger could lurk there. At the same time media pushes a strong narrative of strangers being a potential threat to your health. Avoiding people is the key to prevention of COVID19. Therefore strangers seem dangerous and are a source of uncertainty for an individual.

At this point it is impossible to say how COVID19 changes our perception of the public space or meeting strangers. However, certain developments can be seen that seem very similar to events following 9/11. Therefore it is realistic to assume that COVID19 will have an impact on how safety is perceived within the urban space.

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will introduce the methodological choices made in this thesis, the process of gathering and analyzing the data as well as demonstrates ethical standpoints. The research was conducted by observing two city tours led by women who have experienced homelessness and by three interviews with women who have experienced homelessness in their lives. The city tours were conducted as mobile ethnographies and the interviews were thematic interviews with the special focus on security and spatial topics.

The participants in this thesis are treated as experts of their own experience. There has been an attempt to filter their stories as little as possible and to produce knowledge that they feel is important to share. This thesis aims to take away as much of the researcher's power as possible and give it to the interviewees. This was done by selecting very non-framing research methods and by not having exact research questions but rather only themes to discuss with the participants. The city tours were organized by the women themselves. The participants were informed before the interview that they hold complete power over what they want to share and everything they have to say about the topic is important to the research.

3.2. Mobile ethnography

This thesis aims to form an understanding on how women experiencing homelessness perceive the urban space and how fear has formed for them. Shirlow and Pain argue that the methodological choices have a crucial role in how fear of crime is seen within the discussions over fear. They argue that quantitative methodology is a poor choice when researching something as subjective as fear. Yet quantitative means of data gathering are still vastly used in the research of fear and fear is tried to understand by statistics. Shirlow and Pain argue that qualitative methods are better suited to

understand fear. They argue that there is a promising area of developing work where the concept of fear is challenged and deconstructed. In these accounts the use of fear of crime for political purposes is questioned.[92] The theory section introduced Koskela's thought of the feelings of insecurity being a bigger social issue than the actual, statistical risk of being a victim of violence.[93] This means that there is a strong need for understanding how fear is formed in order to challenge and deconstruct fear forming in the urban setting.

I used mobile ethnography as the method for this thesis. Sheller and Urry suggest that "a mobile ethnography could involve walking with people as a form of deep engagement in their worldview".[94] Mobile ethnography provides a way to see profound insights of the urban city by its inhabitants. Streule argues that mobile ethnography combines participant observation and local everyday experiences to form a vast understanding of urban life.[95] Mobile ethnography moves out from the traditional local, single-sited ethnography. As it is different in nature from the traditional ethnographic research, mobile ethnography requires a more nuanced understanding as there are the social connections of the locations to consider. There has to be a capacity to make connections in discourse from site to site.[96]

Mobile ethnographies can reveal dimensions that structure an individual's life and it is argued to be a very useful tool in the field of geography.[97] As the purpose is to use the theoretical framework of the geography of fear, mobile ethnography could give useful information about the topic. The purpose is to see how spatial dimensions are formed within the lives of women experiencing homelessness and therefore mobile ethnography provides a prominent methodology for this thesis.

Streule proposes that the aim of mobile ethnography is to work towards an understanding of urbanisation and the actors involved in this process by focusing on their everyday socio-territorial practices. Streule also argues that in mobile ethnography the focus is on understanding how certain urban processes are dominant and how they shape urban territories.[98] As this thesis studies who uses

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[92] Shirlow and Pain, 2003, 21.
[93] Koskela, 2009, 105.
[94] Sheller and Urry, 2006, 217.
[95] Schwartz and Streule, 2016, 424.
[96] Marcus, 1995, 97.
[97] Novoa, 2015, 98.
[98] Schwartz and Streule, 2016, 428.

the urban space and how fear is produced in urban processes as well as how marginalized people view these processes, mobile ethnography is a prominent method.

The aim of this thesis is to compare the notions of Koskela's view on geography of fear to those living a marginalized life. While Koskela's original data is based on security barometers and vast questionnaires as well as interviews, this thesis only has a very small data size. As there was an intent to conduct the interviews with women that have experienced homelessness but do not currently experience it, there wasn't too many people to reach out to. The reasons behind interviewing women that currently do not experience homelessness are discussed later. With the small data, it was even more important to use a very holistic, pervasive method in order to form an inclusive picture on the topic.

The ethnographic fieldwork conducted via the street tours as well as thematic interviews help mirror the geography of fear with the experiences of the women interviewed in this thesis. The ethnographic approach is used to form a holistic, comprehensive picture of the experiences these women had in the urban space while homeless.

3.2.1 The street tours

For this thesis' mobile ethnography part I attended two street tours led by women that had experienced homelessness. To secure the anonymity of the street guides leading the tours I will refer to the body organizing the street tours only by the name "a Finnish organization". The organization aims to view homelessness as a human rights violation and they consider the street tours as a way to change attitudes towards people experiencing homelessness. The organization states in their website that they wish to take over the public space to present such knowledge that has been hidden.[99] The idea behind the street tours was to spread information on homelessness. As an aim in this thesis is to study the public space as seen by a marginalized group, the street tours offered a chance to do so.

The street tours were held in two neighborhoods in Helsinki: Pasila and Kontula. The street tours introduced the neighborhoods, their history and current situation as well as the life stories of the

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[99] Since the organization is kept anonymous, no source is provided here.

guides and their experiences with homelessness in the area. The place for the street tours had to be reserved through internet but they were open for all. Paying a tip for the tour guide was voluntary. I reached out to the tour guides via e-mail in the early autumn 2020 and asked if I could attend the tours and use the observations in my thesis. I asked to follow the tours and if I could take notes and photographs (without showing participants in them).

As the purpose of this study is to not retraumatize anyone and to give the interviewees as much power as possible, attending the street tours is a prominent method. The street guides hold complete power over how they want to organize the tours and which parts of their lives they wish to tell. The tours were not adjusted to fit into the needs of this research but rather this research has been adjusted to study anything presented in the tours. As the guides have constructed the tours, they of course mirror their reflection of the urban landscape around them. This is a requirement to form an ethnographic understanding of the world.

During the street tours I used taking notes and photographs as a form of documenting. The route taken was documented in the notes as well as the stops made in during the tour. During the tours I made notes from things seen important and after the tours I wrote a diary entry from the experience. Using these notes I conduct the analysis.

3.2.2. Pasila and Kontula

The street tours were held in Pasila and Kontula, both neighborhoods of Helsinki, Finland's capital. The body organizing the tours held tours all over Helsinki. These two tours were chosen for this thesis as the guides on these tours were women. The neighborhoods were areas where the tour guides had spent time in during their homelessness journeys. On the 2nd street tour the participants were advised that the street tours would be held no matter the weather, as people experiencing homelessness do not get to choose in which weather they are out.

The first street tour was held in Pasila in the autumn of 2020. According to the Helsinki City Executive Office Pasila is the most accessible place in Finland.[100] According to the tour guide, Pasila

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[100] Uutta Helsinkiä website, retrieved from https://www.uuttahelsinkia.fi/en/pasila, read 5/2021.

is a prominent place for jobs and there are more jobs in Pasila than there are residents. Pasila has 10 000 residents. Pasila is a site for a lot of construction and the population of Pasila is expected to double by 2040.[101] During the tour it became evident that there is a lot of construction in Pasila, with new office spaces and houses being built.
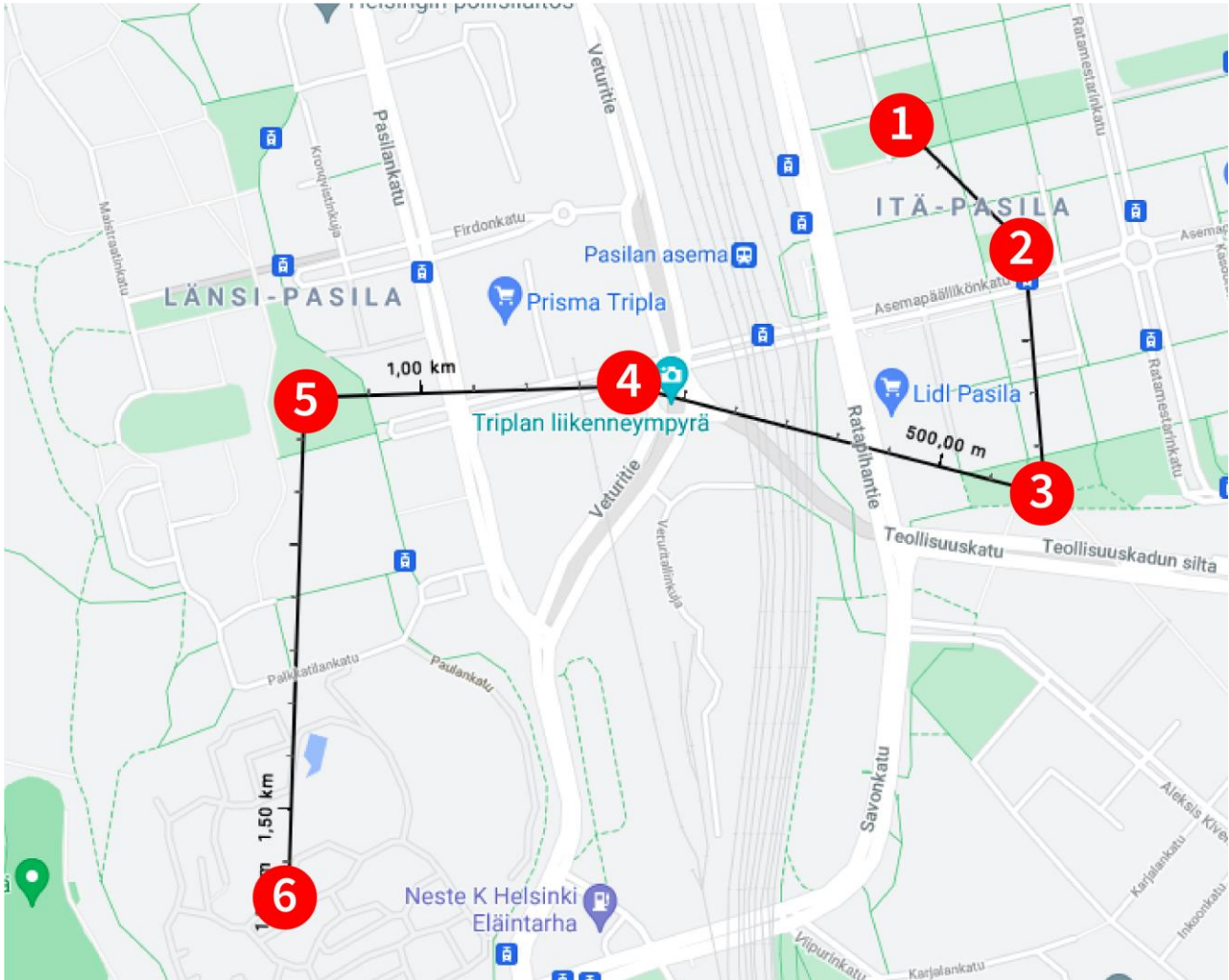
Figure 1: The route in the first street tour

Original picture is from Google maps

The map above shows the route taken in the first street tour. These were the locations of the tour:

1. Rauhanasema. First stop was the old Pasila station, called "Peace Station".

2. Junailijankuja. The second stop was the site of a statue of a woman, which the tour leader called "Pasila's Venus".

3. Pasila bridges

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[101] Helsinki city website, retrieved from https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/fi/kaupunki-ja-hallinto/hallinto/kaupunginosat/pasila, read 5/2021.

4. Tripla area. This was the site of new mall of Tripla.

5. Esteri park

6. Aurora hospital

The second street tour was held in Kontula in the autumn of 2020. Kontula is part of the area of Mellunkylä. Kontula has 15 000 residents and the amount of children is growing more rapidly in Kontula than in other parts of Helsinki. Kontula was the site of the very first Helsinki city's rental houses.[102] Kontula has had a stigma attached and the area has been largely criticized in the media for being a restless area. Kontula football field was the site of the skinhead attacks of 1997 when tens of skinheads attacked a group of immigrants.[103]

Figure 2: The route in the second street tour

Original picture is from Google maps

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[102] Uutta Helsinkiä website, retrieved from https://www.uuttahelsinkia.fi/fi/mellunkyla/osa-alueet, read 5/2021.
[103] Haapanen, 2010.

The map above shows the route taken in the second street tour. These were the locations of the tour:

1. Kontula mall

2. Forest route. Kontula "living room".

3. Kontula football field

4. Kontulankaari. This was the site of Kontula murals.

5. Daycare

6. Peace flagstone
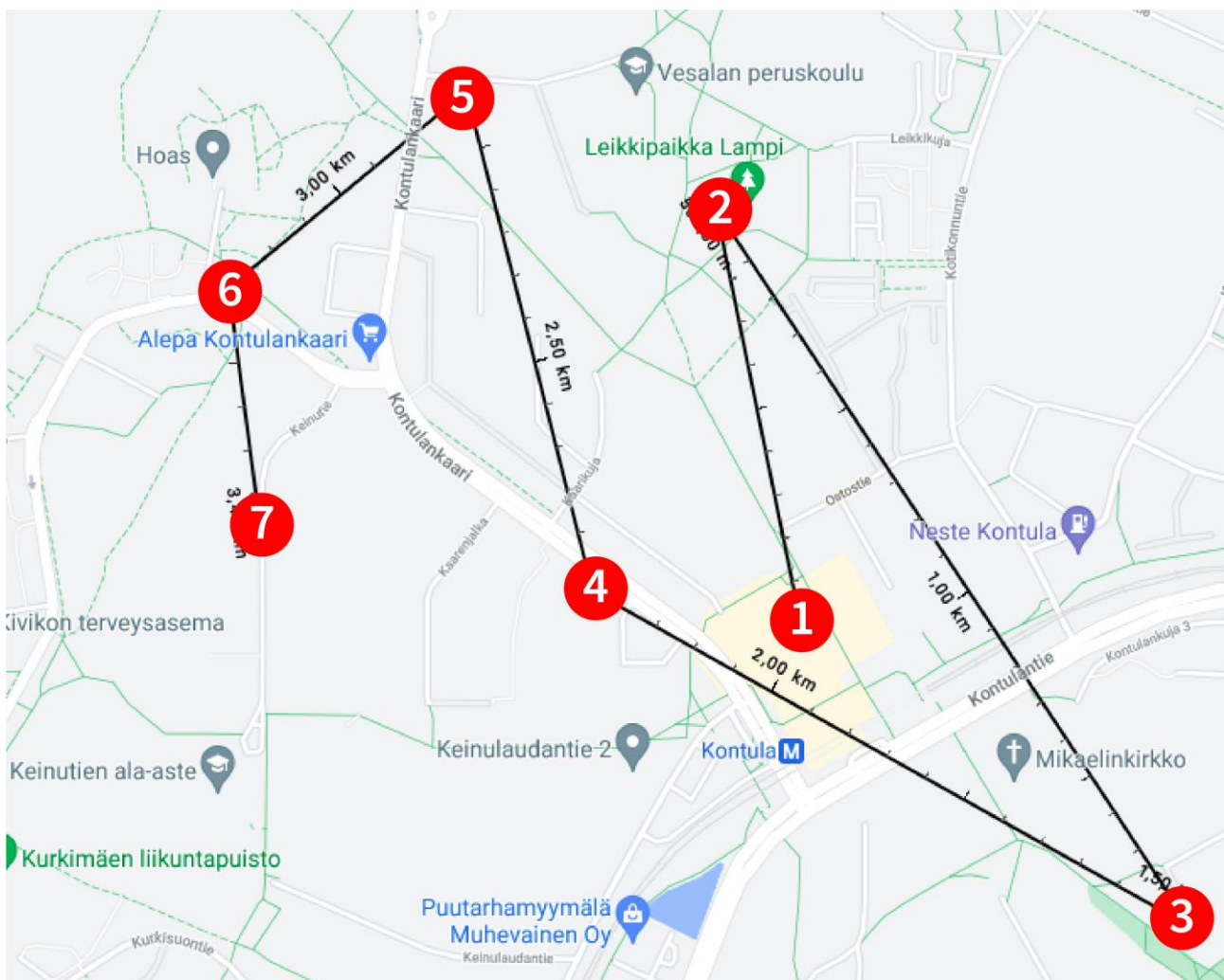
7. Keinutie

3.3. Experts by experience

There was an underlying idea of interviewing so-called experts by experience for this thesis. The women interviewed could be called experts by experience as they have experienced homelessness and are now working with homelessness. In the social sciences the use of so called 'experts by experience' has grown rapidly in recent years.[104] In Finland there are several experts by experience working within homelessness work. For example, the Finnish Housing First 2.0 proposal is the conducted by professionals from municipalities, foundations as well as experts by experience.[105]

Meriluoto argues that the concept of expertise has been challenged in recent years, taking into consideration a "bottom up" approach.[106] Meriluoto also argues that Finnish expertise-by-experience is often government-driven with training that aims to reorganize the participant's life story. The training also tells participants how to 'best' tell their stories to different publics.[107] What needs to be acknowledged with experts by experience is that they have had training to tell their story and therefore might have a more unbroken identity at this point of their lives compared to someone who is experiencing homelessness at the present. They have gained more distance from their experience and

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[104] Meriluoto, 2018, 123.
[105] Asunto ensin 2.0 proposal, 4. retrieved from https://asuntoensin.fi/assets/files/2020/03/EHDOTUS-ASUNNOTTOMUUSTY%C3%96N-POHJAKSI-2020-LUVUN-SUOMESSA.pdf
[106] Meriluoto, 2018, 118.
[107] Meriluoto, 2018, 90.

therefore their views can be different from those that are currently living homeless. However, their point of view is also one that needs to be taken into account when discussing homelessness.

When discussing their role in this research with the interviewees, two out of the three interviewees did not wish to be referred to as experts by experience. They wished to be identified as a woman that had experienced homelessness or as a housing activist. The third interviewee agreed to be called an expert by experience, but when discussing the role she did also admit that there were issues with the title. The issues rose from having "expert by experience" as your title at work. The title itself involves the underlying notion that you have experienced some type of "hardships" in your life and for example meeting new people and telling them your job could be uncomfortable. In some of the interviewees' opinion expertise by experience had not succeeded in bringing up information from the bottom up, but rather that experts by experience were still told what to discuss by higher-ups.[108]

So instead of calling these women experts by experience, I will refer to them as women who have experienced homelessness and are now working with issues regarding homelessness. Their work with homelessness brings them professional expertise on the issue and their outlook on homelessness may therefore vary from someone who is experiencing homelessness right now. Therefore their professionalism has to be acknowledged by this research while they are not called experts here. There is a difference with interviewing people experiencing homelessness right now and between them having some distance to their experiences.

Expertise is not an identity and neither is being homeless. These women I interviewed, are at the intersection of these two and therefore provide the most prominent point of view for this thesis. They are trained to tell their stories and are used to it and therefore interviewing them for this thesis seemed safe in regard to re-traumatizing.

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[108] While this is not a research result in this thesis, it's an interesting discussion to have and could be a topic for a follow-up research.

3.4. Thematic interviews

Thematic interviews were conducted in order to form a deeper understanding of the experiences of women in the urban space. The themes of the interview rose from the theory to form a comprehend picture of the topic to meet the requirements of ethnographical work.

Alastalo et al argue that in principle expert interviews are not an independent interview method. Experts are to be considered as a special group but the interview method should be considered separately.[109] As there was also an ethical issue on calling these experts interviews, there was a need for a separate interview method.

As there was an intent to give as much space as possible to the interviewees, I decided to use thematic interviews where the themes are pre-decided but the conversation is free to flow to the direction the interviewees see as important. There were four themes and they were as follows:

1. Security
2. The right to use the urban space
3. Meaningful places
4. Things in the urban space that would have made the experience of homelessness more bearable

Security was discussed with the specific lens of taking into account the approach of geography of fear. The discussion revolved around feelings of security or insecurity, either if women had felt them during their homelessness or if they felt that the urban area was seen as safe for homeless women. The interviewees were free to discuss their own experiences or their opinions on the matter in general. As they all work in one way or another with issues having to do with homelessness, there was always a general sense to these interviews where they discussed the issues both in their own experiences and as "experts on homelessness".

The right to use the urban space was discussed to map out if the interviewees felt as if they had a right to use the urban space while homeless. This was done to study the use of power in the public place

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[109] Alastalo et al., 2017.

and the narrowing of the public space. As mentioned in the theory section of this thesis, there was an attempt to map out how power relations are seen within spatial networks. Studying the right to a place forms an understanding of how power is distributed within the urban space.

The theme of meaningful places was discussed in order to find out if there were places in the urban city with special meaning attached to them and to see if different places were seen as specially safe or unsafe. The discussion on meaningful places gave a more coherent picture on the city and how it unfolds for these women.

The last point was discussed to see if there were obvious lacks in the urban space while women were homeless and if there were special things that could have made the experience better or the city more inclusive. This guided the discussion towards how city was seen while homelessness and whether there were things that could be done different.

3.5. Feminist methodology

There is a strong gendered point to this thesis as the thesis is focused on women's experiences. Feminist ethical considerations were taken into account as well as feminist methodological choices.

The most prominent feminist standpoint in this research is bringing out women's voices within homelessness research. There is been an attempt to bring awareness into the security of women experiencing homelessness. However, the attempt here is not to compare homeless women's experiences to those of homeless men but rather to compare homeless women's experiences to those women that have homes. Therefore this research exists in a very gendered dimension where it interacts mainly with research conducted from the gendered point of view.

Melanie McCarry conducted a research on gendered violence and her research participants were young people and children. In her empirical study McCarry constructed the research in a way in which the research participants were seen as the experts in the phenomena. McCarry considers this to be a feminist methodological choice.[110] The same choice was made in this thesis where the participants

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[110] McCarry in Hester et al., 2005, 101.

are treated as experts on the phenomena, as well as professional experts to establish their power in this research.

3.5.1. Intersectionality

Intersectionality involves the notion of gender, race, class, disability or other social categories are interconnected and shaped by each other as well as broader social structures. However, the notion of intersectionality does not in itself offer a methodology to conduct a research; it merely offers thought processes to follow throughout the study. There is no consensus as to how intersectionality should be implemented into the research. Some instances argue that it is enough to acknowledge intersectionality in the study and be aware of the political implications and power structures.[111] Within this thesis intersectionality is seen as something that needs to be addressed within women's homelessness research. I see that the whole starting point of this thesis takes into notion intersectionality. Participants in this study are seen belonging to more than just one group; they are addressed by their gender as well as them having experiences with homelessness and their other life experiences that shape their views of the city, such as experiences with substance abuse.

There has been criticism towards the idea that women's homelessness is inherently different from men. Critics argue that this diminishes women's experiences to only gendered perspective of homelessness and does not take into account the many other psychosocial problems homeless women may encounter.[112] This is why feminist research and intersectionality are needed in the homelessness research: to recognize the many issues that have to do with women's homelessness. Gendered perspective recognizes that women navigate homelessness differently from men. However, women are also a heterogenous group and have different issues in life that may affect their experiences through homelessness.

Geography of fear notes that women perceive and move in the city differently from men. This study, taking into account intersectionality, notes that several other classifications, prejudices and structural oppressive patterns homeless women face can have an impact on how the city unfolds for them. This is why in this thesis there is no intent to draw significant differences between women's and men's

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[111] Rice et al., 2019, 410.
[112] Bretherton, 2017.

homelessness but rather to explore the experiences of women that have experienced homelessness and navigate the various levels in society which the phenomen perforates.

3.6. Positionality and ethical considerations

When discussing women that have experienced homelessness, there needs to be a sense of ethical consideration involved. While the focus on this thesis is not on the reasons behind homelessness which often have to do with violence, violence and substance abuse were discussed during the interviews as the interviewees' experiences with homelessness have to do with them. Therefore there needed to be strong ethical considerations involved in the research.

A balance has to be found somewhere between giving voice to these women and not exploiting their story for the sake of my research and or success in graduating. There are already several Finnish studies that involve stories of homeless women. All of the women I interviewed mentioned that they get quite a lot of interview requests for different studies. Therefore there needed to be a different approach to this study so that it would benefit the academia by its merits. Many other studies on the subject are done within the social sector and there generally isn't a security-orientated take on them.

Working with a very marginalized group poses some ethical issues of which the researcher needs to stay mindful. One important notion is that vulnerability is not a synonym to being a victim. The research cannot place someone in the role of victim if they do not see themselves that way. While this research discusses issues such as insecurity and masculinization of space, there has to be the underlying notion of the interviewees not seeing their situation at all within those frames. This ethical consideration is tackled here by interviewing people that have had training to discuss their experiences and may have a more unbroken identity than someone experiencing homelessness right now.

Many ethical problems are tackled by interviewing women that are not currently experiencing homelessness and had had outside help with telling their stories and forming an unbroken identity.

4. Analysis

In the analysis chapter I will discuss the themes developed from the theory and mirror them to the interviews as well as the street tours to form a coherent picture of the theme discussed. The themes analyzed here are security and fear, exclusion, finding a place in the urban space, frightening places as well as what the participants felt was missing from the urban space when they were experiencing homelessness.

The participants are called here Sylvia, Maria and Aino. These are not their real names, but names I and the women have chosen. Whenever there are parts of discussion shown, I am seen as Saana. Working with first names has been a conscious choice, one that derives from the idea of these "interviews" being discussions where the participants inform me on their lives as homeless.

The street tours are called 1st street tour and 2nd street tour. The first street tour was held in Pasila at the end of October 2020. The second one was held in Kontula at the end of November 2020. Both had other people taking the tour as well and discussions and questions were encouraged by the tour leaders. The tours were completely planned by the tour guides and they held complete power over what they wanted to share about their experiences in life. While they encouraged all questions, they also told us that they could refuse to answer if they so wished.

All of the interviews were conducted in Finnish and the translations are made by me. The analysis was conducted by going through the transcriptions of the interviews and the notes and diaries from the street tours and coding the quotations and notes to correspond certain themes.

This thesis is focused on how the urban space of Helsinki unfolds for women experiencing homelessness. However, this analysis covers also topics that do not at first seem to be connected to the urban space, such as childhood experiences and falling out of society. These are issues that came up during the interviews and the street tours and the participants felt they were important in the context of how they perceive the urban space. As argued before, Hille Koskela claims that production of space has to take into account the symbolic values given to the space.[113] For these women, these

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[113] Koskela, 1999, 2.

childhood experiences and feelings of exclusion are deeply embedded with how their personal maps of the urban space have developed.

4.1. Security and fear

Koskela argues that people that are the most vulnerable, experience the most fear. She also argues that the groups that face most oppression are most afraid and that existential insecurity would lead to fear.[114] Women experiencing homelessness can be argued to be a very oppressed group as they do not enjoy the same chances or autonomy as people with homes do. They also face existential insecurity in the form of not knowing how to get food or a place to sleep. However, with the participants of this thesis, being more afraid was not the case for two of them.

Security and fear for some of the women was something they did not really consider at the time of being homeless. The feelings of insecurity would come later in life, when they were in a place where they could experience it. Not feeling fear even in extreme situations was explained by drug using, constant under- or overstimulation or only focusing on survival. In these two cases the existential insecurity did not translate into fear. In this quote Maria explains the existential insecurity and how it did not make her any more fearful at the time, but rather the feelings have become visible later:

> *Maria: Afterwards, when I've processed things, I realized I have been constantly afraid and reserved and I didn't know what would happen next, or like all the time you are living hand to mouth and if you have any money, it's gone like that and if you have a place to sleep in, it's just for one night. So all the time you have to sort of play it moment by moment and it has been distressing to never know what's going to happen… yeah.*
>
> *Saana: Right. So when you were experiencing it you didn't really think about whether it was..*
>
> *Maria: Yeah.*
>
> *Saana: ..unsafe. But now later you have thought about it.*
>
> *Maria: Yeah, now that I experience feelings of safety.*

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[114] Koskela, 1999, 304.

Saana: Right.

Maria: Then you realize, that it was really hard.

Maria also discussed "numbing herself" at first. The feelings of insecurity became visible much later in life for her.

I have pretty well numbed myself, at first. But then after the fact you start noticing that there is a lot of experiences of fear that you haven't processed. But maybe then you wouldn't recognize it but then afterwards you realize you are very timid in some situations, as a result.-Maria

These quotes show how the situation she was in, was the evident cause for not being afraid for Maria. As she explains, she does feel these feelings of being afraid, later in life. But when she was experiencing homelessness, she could not have experienced it. Aino had the same kind of experiences where she did not really consider safety or security while being homeless:

Saana: Do you feel that when you were experiencing homelessness and you were in that state that you would even think about safety or unsafety? Or did you even think...

Aino: No, no, no. You don't really think about it so you just take more drugs so that you don't have to think.

Aino explains this by being either under- or overstimulated all the time. She says that she has had the survival mode on all the time which had prevented her from seeking help.

I have never been the sort of person to seek any help, cause I have like, since I was a kid, I have had a survival mode on, where I need to manage for myself. So, I have left the foster care at fourteen and I ran away and had to manage myself from a very young age so I was never really willing to receive any help. But I have to say that I was always so overstimulated or understimulated. So you couldn't really get any contact to me and also I have always been in a survival mode like where do I get a place to sleep or where do I get drugs or where do I get this and that so no one could really face me in level where I could be like peaceful anywhere.-Aino

It was presented in the theory that experiences of violence made women more fearful.[115] Aino did not feel more fear even if she had had experiences of extreme violence during her homelessness. In this quote Aino describes the insecurity of using drugs and the extreme violence she experienced:

> *I have mainly moved from one apartment to another and some were unsafe and some not so it dependent on which circles I ran with so… Umm.. I have also had like from the start, using drugs, these group apartments, where we have been and the deeper and deeper you go into that drug using world, there's bound to be a lot of violence. And when I was staying with these guys, there has been… I have been held captive by my own boyfriend. We were homeless but we had been given an apartment to use and in the end I was there, chained to a radiator. -Aino*

The quote above shows how violence was seen as an inevitable part of the drug using world. For Sylvia, fear was something she did consider while homeless. She felt it very much during her experience as homeless. When asked whether there were any certain places where she would be afraid she answered:

> *Whenever it would get dark. When it came dark or even twilight. Yeah, I was in a state of panic. So for me the urban space was not safe. Parks, forests, places like that, I was always terrified. I was always so sure that I would get murdered somewhere or even something like this apartment building area, a place that was sort of like bunker-like, I was so sure I would get killed there. And just the extreme feeling of insecurity.-Sylvia*

This quote above shows how fear is situational. For Sylvia, the time of the day was a big factor in how fear formed for her. Sylvia's experiences with security shifted too as she got further from the experiences of being homeless.

> *I didn't have a smart phone back then when I was homeless, didn't have one. But in a way, I couldn't've listened to music. Because all the time you had to have your senses up. To know what's going on around you. And for example now, I can run in the forest and listen to music. Because I don't feel any more like I'm being chased*

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[115] Koskela, 1999, 312.

after. So I have gotten more of that feeling of safety every time I run. Back then,
and this was for years, my personal state of terror, like I was being chased.-Sylvia

Sylvia's experiences as a homeless woman were very much influenced by the feeling of escaping. She had left home because of an extreme threat to her security by a family member, which influenced her homelessness journey. Sylvia also found that drug using was also a major cause for insecurity. She described the insecurity of the drug using like this:

So you have been surrounded by people in the same situation. And when those
people do drugs, it's certainly not safe when no one realizes anything of the real
world. Everyone is escaping from it too. -Sylvia

Every participant interviewed had been in a state where survival is the most important thing. They have felt that they were escaping, that they were surviving, that they were understimulated or overstimulated. All of these things came first and there was no room for being afraid. For some of them feelings of insecurity had come later in life. It was stated in Maria's interview that when she was able to have feelings of safety, the feelings of insecurity would come too. Sylvia had experienced same type of feeling. She talked about having creative hobbies all through her life:

I feel like, I am lucky, that my emotions have somewhere been put into a package.
Even though it has required that feeling of safety to be brought to life. Those
feelings never died, when I have had enough safety then.. Then you have been able
to grow. -Sylvia

The quote above also shows how deeply safety has affected how feelings were formed. Having enough safety, made it possible for Sylvia to experience other feelings too. Maria discussed the gender differences between women and men and how different the experience of homelessness was for them:

If I didn't have a place to sleep I would get to know someone who helped me out.
They have usually been situations where I have been by myself and they have been
men who have offered the help. And in that sense, it is easier than it is for men [that
are homeless]. Like, if I have been with a male friend, it would have been harder to
get that help [...] But there is always the risk of exploitation or then it's like pre-

discussed that we are exchanging commodities, so there is quite a lot of that, the risk of exploitation. So if you just live on the streets and those places are very male-dominated and people are unpredictable, they can be violent…-Maria

In this quote above we can see how differently fear of sexual exploitation is seen in Maria's experiences than it is in the theory introduced earlier. In the theory, fear of crime was seen as something that restricted women from using places. Maria knew that there was a chance of sexual exploitation or violence but still felt that being homeless was in a sense easier to women than to men as it was easier to find places to sleep the night. This also shows how differently Maria experienced gender in the urban space. For her, being a woman was an advantage because it meant that she would get a place to sleep more easily than men.

This also shows how differently the urban space gets negotiated for the participants. The theory part presented that fear was negotiated with individuals through signs and mental maps over what is seen as dangerous. For Maria, the negotiations formed differently. She knew there was a risk of sexual exploitation, yet it was seen as the "easier" option. In this instance, not having a place to sleep changed the spatial negotiations in a major way.

In Koskela's study women that had had violent experiences, became more wary of using the urban space and were more afraid.[116] These trajectories were not visible in these women's stories. All of the participants had had either serious threat to their health or had experienced violence. However, in their experiences, they did not consider security that much. Feelings were either numbed or they could not feel them. In some parts they felt that survival and the chance of having a place to stay the night were the most important things and those surpassed the threat of exploitation or violence. Sylvia on the other hand had experienced insecurity and fear and for her the feelings were very extreme. She was afraid of getting killed. The feelings rose when it came dark. For Aino and Maria however, there was no room for considering security.

In the theory section it was stated that sexual harassment and violence or threat of it, excludes women from using certain spaces.[117] However, in the stories of the participants, these practices were not visible. The women excluded themselves from spaces due to the shame and exclusion by their situation rather than their gender. The threat of sexual exploitation did not stop women from using

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[116] Koskela, 1999, 312.
[117] Koskela, 1999, 312.

spaces. It was evident for them that using the homes of the men for places to sleep in would require sexual favors, but it was seen as an exchange of goods. The risk of exploitation was also seen as a bearable risk level in exchange for the place to sleep. This again shows how differently women experiencing homelessness navigate these situations, as finding a place to sleep is seen as the most important thing.

Gender-based violence was present in the stories of the women. For Sylvia, the homelessness journey had begun due to an extreme threat to violence. Aino had experienced intimate partner violence from her boyfriend. For Sylvia, these experiences had shaped her experiences as homeless a lot, by making her feel like she was escaping all the time. These women's perspectives had changed in a very significant way since their homelessness journeys had ended and they had felt safety and security which shows that for the participants experiencing homelessness had a big effect on their feelings towards fear and safety.

How fear formed for these women shows how situational fear is. The women navigated insecurity through their situation at the time. Maria's experience of finding a place to sleep being more important than the risk of sexual exploitation, shows that homelessness was for her the most dominant navigational tool in the urban space. Finding a place to sleep exceeded the very likeable risk of being a victim of a crime.

4.2. Exclusion

> *I have been branded by pretending to be invisible. Like somehow all of my life has been determined by kind of escaping from reality. Like escapism. Which is in small amounts fine but to put it in a perspective… I haven't wanted to exist. Or to be seen anywhere. -Sylvia*

It was argued in the theory section that gender is one of the biggest factors causing exclusion in the urban space. Women are not using certain spaces because of the fear of crime and ultimately because of the masculinization of the space.[118] In the experiences of the participants, exclusion had happened

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[118] Koskela, 1999, pp. 15-16.

to them very early in their lives. The causes behind exclusion were embedded in the shame of their situation, falling completely out of the society and drug using. Their experiences of exclusion were so deep it affected their usage of the urban space in major ways. Gender was however not mentioned as the cause of the exclusion.

Being an outsider in the society prevailed through the data. It was present in the street tours as well as in the interviews. All of the participants had felt it in one way or another. For some, exclusion wasn't even a thing they thought about. It just existed in everyday practices where participants would avoid certain areas because they did not feel like they belonged there. Shame was also present in their stories of how they used the public space.

Aino had an experience of not being aware of whether people were staring or not as she was not noticing it due to drug using. Using drugs was a way of not seeing the exclusion of other people. Now, later in life, she does notice that people stare at homeless people but she personally had not seen it then.

> *Like, when people have asked if I felt like by passers were staring, like, I see now, that people stare when there's a homeless person or something, but I didn't really feel like I was stared. I just took more drugs so that I didn't have to think about it.*
> *-Aino*

Exclusion has been very strong for these women. It has shaped their experience and the way they have used the urban and public space. In the following chapters the exclusion is viewed from the point of view of falling out of the society and the exclusion in the urban space.

4.2.1. Falling out of the society

Feelings of being completely isolated from society were seen throughout the interviews and street tours. It is visible in the interviews that the participants felt they had fallen out of the society and services, some since a very early age. Drug using was a big part of the experiences the women had with homelessness. Exclusion was in some instances seen as having derived from drug usage, like in this quote from Maria:

I mean, addictive diseases themselves are pretty exclusive, or one of its main symptoms is that it excludes you, so in that sense too, I have had really few experiences where I would have experienced that I belonged anywhere. So in a way getting any company from other people has been important because somehow being alone with your own thoughts has been the most painful or devastating to my mental health. So when you have been able to talk to people and they understand, it's like wow. -Maria

In Aino's case exclusion from the society had been there for a long time, ever since she left the foster care. For her, the exclusion had in some instances been so strong she felt as if she had vanished from the face of the earth:

I felt as if I had never been a part of this society, except for when I went to school maybe, so I have lived on the other side of the society, with crime and such so there wouldn't be like… Somehow I had no idea that there were severance therapy or rehab or possibilities like that. The circles that I ran with, people either die or go to prison there.[…] So in a way, I have dropped out of the services in a very young age. Actually, already after children's home. Like, I have dropped out the services somehow. So I feel like I would have been impossible to help so yeah. -Aino

But maybe I have left myself out of everything [..] I didn't even get any social welfare at some point, so I have been vanished from the face of the earth for a while. -Aino

Sylvia had this experience, where she liked seeing people that had jobs and were attached to the society but she felt that that would never be an option for her. This shows how in her mind she did not belong to the same reference group as those people she was watching going to work and getting out of work. However, it was important to her that there wouldn't be too many people there.

It was so concretely clear for me that other people had lives. That I could never do that. Which was of course only my own belief, clearly I can do it. But I thought that I could never again do it, or I hadn't really ever gotten there, to the working life yet. So in my mind that brought me, like, safety. Like seeing those people brought

my security. But still there wasn't like too much of it, it probably wouldn't have worked for me in like Shanghai, that would have been horrible, fuck. -Sylvia

The meaning of structures was seen as an important thing and something lacking in the women's life and something that kept them from attaching to the society. For Sylvia, there had been many issues with finding independence and she felt as though many people needed more support when they were becoming independent:

Like why someone has decided that there is this Housing First principle and it works. Like, if a person has an apartment, they'll be fine. It doesn't go like that. They need more than the apartment, if there is a lot underneath there, that you would think that, umm, a person with more secure upbringing would know when they move out of their childhood homes. Or like, many people know how to operate in this world, many don't. It's pretty fifty sixty. -Sylvia

Sylvia discussed the meaning of structures and how they brought her safety. For her, structures never really existed during her childhood or experiences as homeless:

…my life was really very much uncontrollable. Because no one had taught me how to, like, take care of myself. [..] So I would have needed concrete services where I would get help. With these basic life control and structures, umm, with it like, I would have understood that structures bring you safety. I never had them, even as a kid. So it was really chaotic and there should be services, and there are for substance recoverees these services where you get to go to the institutional care, where you have really strict structures around you and you can't do anything for yourself… But in there you learn the importance of routines, which would have been good before… Well, yes, substance abuse, at that point, like, I have stepped from very broken childhood into like adulthood… independent adulthood. -Sylvia

In the 2nd street tour the importance of childhood structures was discussed at the sight of Kontula murals. The three murals are painted to the walls of the city owned apartment buildings. The apartment building area is Helsinki's biggest rental housing concentration. The city organized the murals to be painted there. The tour leader was very happy with them and told us that she felt that they represented change.

Figure 3: Mural in Kontula

For her, this mural of a man holding up a child, represented how adults should hold children up and offer them a base for life. In here she discussed how she had never much felt that and how these "life's structures" are not formed for everyone in their childhood. She personally felt that she had had issues with supporting her own life. She had too learnt later that structures bring you safety. The murals represent citizens taking over the urban space. In the landscape that is usually blank, there are now three big murals painted by different artists. During our street tour, a resident of one of the houses came up to us and told us how happy and proud she was to be living there, in a house that was painted with a mural.

The participants felt like they were missing tools to become independent and they felt as if they were inherently different form other people. Falling completely out of the society had happened early on for the participants and it was a major part of their life experience. In the next chapter I discuss how these feelings of exclusion and isolation affected the women's use of the urban space.

4.2.2. Exclusion in the urban space

As it has been established in the theory section of this thesis, a space is produced by people using it or not using it. Cities are refusing the space from already marginalized groups that don't necessarily have the resources to go anywhere else. This increases marginalization for these already marginalized groups as their encounters with other parts of society become even more limited. If people consider others as a danger to them, they strive to only use spaces where there are people like you in.[119]

Exclusion was the biggest factor in how the women navigated the urban space. Exclusion was seen as restrictive in their mental maps. In the interviews it became very clear that the exclusion, shame and insecurity meant that the women would not use certain spaces in the city.

> *But it is a reality as a homeless person in particular that if you are using drugs and I realized it at that point too, that when I used amphetamine daily, I couldn't go to any old friend, that doesn't use, and ask for a place to stay the night. -Sylvia*

In this quote above from Sylvia she describes how she couldn't just go to someone who doesn't use drugs and ask for help. This shows the same themes as in the previous chapter, where drug using excludes you and makes you more involved with the reference group of other drug users. The same thing is seen in Maria's interview where she talks about how it is easier to spend time with "people like you":

> *Maybe I avoided places that were like… rich areas, where you felt like you were watched. Like, I went to Punavuori a few times, because there were homeless services and closer to the centre I noticed that people would change the side of the street or hold on to their purses harder or like you would feel uncomfortable, it was easier to spend time with people like yourself. -Maria*

Maria felt uncomfortable when people would act like this. In these instances where people were changing the side of the street, Maria was seen as the other that people were afraid of. She herself felt as if it was easier to avoid those places altogether and only use spaces that allowed her to spend time

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[119] Koskela, 2009, 41.

with people she identified more with. For Aino the thing that stopped her from using certain places was shame.

> *I don't think I have ever thought about whether I had right to be there, maybe more like… Maybe I have rather thought that I wouldn't go to places because I have felt ashamed. Like the shame has sort of stopped me from seeking help and going to places. So… also I haven't known about the services that existed at the time. -Aino*

> *The experience has been powerful anyway, like, I know I don't belong here but I'm just using this space and trying to be invisible. […] And just the fact that you are kept out of the society and they are trying to solve this problem even though the solution is to connect it to the surrounding society. It's really simple actually.-Maria*

These quotes above again demonstrate how space is related to the social relations. The women had an image in their head over how homelessness or drug using is seen by society and that prevented them from using the urban space. For these women, there was an understanding that they were not accepted by others and they did not belong which then affected how they used the urban space.

There had also been banning and exclusion from the societal level. Judgement was seen as something that restricts the use of spaces or services. Drug using is seen to be the reason for denying medical help in this instance:

> *Especially, when you shoplift and do crimes, you get many bans to places, like shops and malls and such. And then when you are a drug user people take you for a thief even if you have stopped shoplifting, the first thing is that they throw you out like don't come here. And it happens in health care too, when you seek medical help, they deny it because you are a drug user. Like, I have been thrown out of a medical center and five hours later I have called myself an ambulance and well.. it was a blood poisoning and I was close to dying so. Also the fact that with people… they judge pretty easily, even by your looks, which is not nice.-Aino*

Strong feelings of exclusion and shame prevented Aino and Maria from using certain places. They felt judged by other people in these places. Maria felt strong feelings of not having a right to use

certain places whereas Aino claimed not having thought about it but then also mentioned that she did feel judged and ashamed. When asked if Maria spent her time in the area she spent most of her childhood in because of the childhood experiences she answered:

> *Yeah, it always felt like it was easy to come here and here was always people you knew so you would end up coming here more easily.-Maria*

How the women used the urban space had to do with familiarity of a certain place, banning, exclusion by shame and judgement by other people. Places were found attractive due to familiarity and having people that you identified with there. However, other places were not used due to extreme feelings of exclusion that the women had felt for a very long time in their lives. They felt as certain places weren't belonging to them and they could not use them. This proves how their personal maps of the city developed through exclusion.

The exclusion had started early on for the participants, from missing structures in childhood or early independent life to drug using and deep shame of their situation. They felt invisible and isolated. The exclusion was not seen as a gendered practice, but the exclusion was seen to be deeply interconnected to the experiences in their lives as well as their situation at the time of being homeless. The exclusion played a large role in how the urban space unfolded for them. The participants felt completely different from "others". Their mental maps were formed due to exclusion and shame and those feelings created boundaries to their use of the urban space. The women had perceived images over how the society saw them and used the space accordingly. They had preconceptions over how the society perceived homelessness and or drug using and used the space accordingly. They created boundaries between themselves and others due to their situation.

Participants in this thesis felt that facing other people would have been helpful during their experience with homelessness. Urban planning holds a great power over how people meet and face each other and in that sense there is a major possibility for urban spaces to change these structures. Public space is supposed to offer the chances to face people and to be visible to them, but as seen in the stories of these women, using the public space is more complex of a practice than it seems.

4.3. Finding safety in the urban space

In the theory feelings of safety were explained to be derived from strong sense of community. Koskela also found that women "being bold" in the city had to do with reasoning the fear away, being courageous because of awareness of how plausibly the threat of violence is, taking possession of space by using it frequently and ability to respond sensibly when facing a threat.[120] Koskela also argues that women found safety in other people. They were confident that other people were not a danger to you and therefore found crowded places more safe than empty ones.[121]

Finding safety after their experiences as homeless has for these women opened up other things too, such as feelings of insecurity or emotions, or breaking their speechlessness or shame. But there was also evidence that they had tried to find safety during their homeless experience as well. Finding safety during homelessness came across differently for the women. Aino said she found safety from no one knowing where you are. Aino described her using stairwells in the following way:

> *Aino: And sometimes I was happy to stay at stairwells just because no one knew where you were. So that was also like, you had a moment to yourself where you can just be with you. That's the thing about stairwells that you have to go there after people are sort of "in for the night" and you have to leave very early so that no one finds you there.-Aino*

> *Well yeah stairwells or then I would get into.. get into someone's apartment in one way or another, so either you had drugs or you had to have sex. Or I don't even know if I really had to have sex but I have myself experienced that I had to, that I would be indebted somehow, like there was that obligation or something. Probably I wouldn't have actually had to do all those things I did to get a place to stay the night. [...] And especially with women, somehow, I feel like it leads a lot to that sex, sex and drugs and money are the things that make it go around so you don't always want to be fucked or somehow taken advantage of so it's easier to be there in there stairwell alone.-Aino*

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[120] Koskela, 1999, 304.
[121] Koskela, 1999, 310.

For Aino, staying alone in the stairwell offered an alternative for trying to find a place to stay by having to do sexual favors. She found safety and peace from sleeping alone somewhere where no one knew where you were. In this instance it is shown that crowded places and other people did not bring safety to Aino, but rather no one knowing where you were did. This again shows how differently spatial negotiations happened for the participants. Koskela's theory suggests that women found safety in other people. They were confident that other people were not a danger to you and therefore found crowded places more safe than empty ones.[122] In Aino's situation, safety was found from no one knowing where you were and it was found better and safer to be alone.

For Maria, safety was found in practices such as sleeping in a pile of her clothes:

> *It's like deranged in a way where sometimes I feel very nostalgic about the senses of security I would get. Like I would have a pile of clothes in my backpack and then me and my friends have piled them in some corner so it would have been warmer to sleep there. Even though it's awful but I got like a warm and safe experience from it. So maybe I have like explained it to myself like that, or somehow I have resorted to it for safety but yeah… -Maria*

Maria had also found safety in day centers where she felt as she could lie down in a "structured environment". She felt as if those day centers were a "port of refuge".

> *There were some acquaintances whose places felt good. Umm.. Of course they were users too so that there could be unpredicted situations but then I would apply myself there, but then especially day centers and such. It has been a certain type of.. human contact. If you didn't get any sleep at night you could go there and have a lie down and there's the workers and it's sort of a structured environment. So that you got that… port or refuge sort of feeling.-Maria*

For Sylvia, safety was found in her hobbies.

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[122] Koskela, 1999, 310.

But then another safe place I had had, was, music and dancing. And writing. So.. for me creating has always been really important. And it's been, it has been. I am really thankful for that. -Sylvia

Finding safety unfolded very differently for these women than Koskela's theory suggests. The participants did not have faith in other people and safety was not found in crowded places. The participants had completely different ways of finding safety. Surely, they did use the familiar spaces but in other instances safety was found very differently. In the theory it was presented that the threat was calculated to find safety. This too was visible in the women's stories but in many cases they acknowledged that there was a high risk to use the space but they would use it anyway. This too shows how completely differently the urban space was navigated by these women.

Community and fellowship, belonging and cohesiveness were seen in the data as something that the women wished there was more of. This was especially visible during the street tours as both tour leaders discussed these themes and how the lack thereof or finding fellowship in some part of their lives shaped their experiences.

One of the stops in the 1st street tour was the new mall of Pasila, Tripla. To our left was the brand new mall, to our right a construction site and beyond that the railway yard with several red brick buildings. In this intersection of old, new and yet to be built, the tour leader discussed the vast changes in the urban profile of Pasila. The new mall had obviously brought in a lot of changes. It had brought in new businesses, new jobs and new people. The construction site to our right used to be a park, where families with children would play on weekends. Now it was barred with fences.

Beyond the construction site, laid the railway yard. The tour leader had slept on the empty carriages there. In the past it had been possible to sleep in the carriages and they were warm. But the tour leader told that you couldn't sleep there anymore. In the brick buildings there had been some community action which included activities such as community garden. Here the tour guide discussed the importance of the community. She wished there would be more space for communal activities in the city. She had strong feelings towards citizen activism and she wished it was possible in more parts of the city.

Figure 4: The intersection in Pasila

In the intersection there was a symbolic value given to the park that had been converted to a construction site. Many of the participants in the tour remembered playing in the park as children and so did the tour leader. There was a discussion on the changes that Pasila had faced in the recent decades.

In 2nd street tour the tour leader discussed the feelings of togetherness she had experienced during her homelessness journey. At the site of her childhood daycare she discussed her childhood which had consisted of a lot of relocations. Her family hadn't stayed in one place for long which had made it harder for her to form friendships and she had felt out of place since her childhood. As homeless she explained she had formed these self-built communities. She had found people that did not feel like they belonged either. They had found cohesiveness in their shared feeling of being an outsider. And for her those feelings were very valuable.

The tour leader explained that when she had been homeless she very much identified herself with Disney's Hunchback of Notre Dame. She identified with the feelings of being ostracized by everyone just like the Hunchback had. She felt as if the movie described a deep feeling of not belonging.

Sylvia discussed community in her interview too. She felt like citizens should be more active in seeking out places to "take over" in the urban space:

> *And in the urban space, of course, I wish there were a lot more… citizens would dare and there would be more places to take over. And to use them for the common needs. Which would support the communality. And everything that supports presence and the meaningfulness of togetherness. That it would take away from technology and such, not that there's anything wrong with technology but what sucks us into it, that we are away from where we really are. Presence would somehow be..-Sylvia*

The feelings of exclusion were very strong among the participants. For the participants the biggest issues regarding the use of space have been shame and exclusion, not fear. The participants felt as if they were never really faced, some even felt like they were "beyond help" because of the ultimate exclusion. For the participants the exclusion had started early on, mostly from childhood that had not prepared them enough to join the society as a sovereign member.

The participants' wishes for finding a community and a sense of belonging show how space is not free from social relations. For the participants, the sense of not belonging was a major factor in how the urban space unfolded for them. On the other hand, the distrust on other people shaped their experiences and use of the urban space and on the other hand a strong desire to fit in was also a driver in how their mental maps over the urban space were formed.

The exclusion was worsened because of the shame of their situation and the outside attitudes that made the women feel as their situations was their own fault. In Finland this attitude can be heard a lot in the public conversations where people keep saying that no one has to be homeless in a civilized state such as Finland and that homelessness is a choice. From the experiences of these women, it is evident how harmful these attitudes can be.

4.4. Finding a place in the city

In the interviews, one of the themes was meaningful places. This was discussed to see how the participants' mental maps over the urban space formed. In the theory section it was concluded that individual's mental maps of fear are formed through media, unpleasant encounters, shared knowledge and other factors having to do with how fear is formed for an individual.[123] It was also argued that the decisions to use the space derive from experiences and from the information that is available, rather than the exact statistics about how likely it is to become a victim of a crime in a certain place.[124] These created texts are a part of how individuals' mental maps' over urban space form and how the urban space gets used.

Both of the street tours had stops at the daycares that the tour guides had attended as children. This shows that the tour guides spent their time as homeless in a familiar place – a place that was known to them from their childhood. Koskela has argued that places become more safe to you the more you use it.[125] When asked if she stayed in Pasila because it felt more peaceful, Sylvia answered:

> *For me it has been more that kind of feeling, than any fact based knowledge on whether there is less incidents here than somewhere else. But yeah, there wasn't many people here. Other than between seven and five, or like, in the time when people go to work. Because there's a lot of jobs here. In other times it's pretty quiet. -Sylvia*

Sylvia spent her time as homeless mostly in Pasila. She explained staying there by having many pivotal experiences of her life being situated in Pasila.

> *Well, Pasila, I have spent a lot of my childhood here. So I have had my grandma here, my dad's mom. And I have gone, I have started my school there in the elementary school. I have a lot of childhood memories from here. .. Childhood, like, memories, which probably has been, even while homeless, this unconscious seeking of security somehow. Like, they have been my childhood points of reference,*

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[123] England & Simon, 2010, 202.
[124] Koskela, 1999, 89.
[125] Koskela, 1999, 308.

safest places somehow, even though it has been shaken, for example in the second grade when my dad went to prison and suddenly I had no friends at school. But those outside factors, like school, were very meaningful for me, because I was so scared of being at home. So they have been very important places for me and in Pasila those have been the most long lasting times timeline-wise. And then surely pretty much like, the things that have shaped myself have happened, like I remember vividly. So Pasila has been shaped to my memories pretty well.-Sylvia

As mentioned in the theory section, the decisions to use the space derive from experiences and from the information that is available, rather than some statistics about how likely it is to become a victim of a crime in a certain place.[126] In this quote it can be seen that for Sylvia there has been the emotional attachment that has made her feel safer in Pasila and her experiences from Pasila.

A stop on the 2nd street tour was a route that led through a forest. In the middle of the route was a square where there was a bronze statue. The statue had several bronze animals on it. One animals was lost from the herd, it was walking alone further along. The tour leader felt that it was nice that even though one animal had been lost from the herd, it still held an eye contact to others. The statue mirrors coexistence.

There were benches around the statue and the tour leader felt that it was a good place to meet other people. The square was situated in a way that many people would pass through it, as there were several roads that went through it. She had sat there many times, as the forest route was a very familiar route to her as her friend lived by it. She told us that she used to sit on the benches and talk to other people. In there she experienced human contact and felt like she had been faced by others. She told us that in bars etc., you tend to talk to those people you know, in the benches you could talk to anyone.

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[126] Koskela, 1999, 89.

Figure 5: The living room of Kontula

The 1st street tour started at the old Pasila station, which had been at use until the building of Tripla mall and the newer station. The tour leader explained that she liked to start the tour there as the Pasila station was such an important place for her. She had spent a lot of time there when she was homeless as the station was had broad opening hours and she felt as if she was left alone there and no one ever banned her from using the place.

At one stop in the 1st street tour in western Pasila the tour leader told us that many streets were named after women and she liked it. In western Pasila we explored the grounds of Aurora hospital. The tour leader told us that that was the place where the bitterness ended. It was where she had been admitted to the ward of substance psychiatry. She had all her life tried to get help and in Aurora hospital she finally got it. That was also where she joined NA (Narcotics Anonymous) which had been a life-changing experience for her. In there the tour leader has experienced the power of peer support and had gotten the help she had wanted throughout her life.

For Maria the meaningful places have been these places where you can stay warm:

I spent quite a lot of time in malls and in public transportation where you could stay warm and. Umm. Well you can sit in a bus for as long as you want and there wasn't any problem. And then there has been a few times when we were able to go to bigger malls to stay the night after they had closed, like in a corner somewhere. One experience was that we were in a stairwell and the guard came and the guard just closed the door, like let them sleep here. -Maria

Safe places for the women consisted of places that would offer you utilities such as staying warm or places the women knew from before. In the 2nd street tour the "living room of Kontula" was seen as a very meaningful place as it offered the experiences of coexisting with other people.

The experience of staying in Pasila for Sylvia was derived from having spent a lot of time there which shows how her personal map had developed. This was the case too in both of the street tours. The tour guides had spent their time as homeless in their childhood environments.

These experiences again show how negotiations over how to use the space differed from the theory section. The participants formed their mental maps of the urban space based largely on their situation as homeless. Their negotiations over urban space were shaped over exclusion, wishing to find a place to sleep and also their wish to have human contact. They strived to found places that offered warmth and a place to sleep.

4.5. Places of fear

For Aino and Maria, shelters rose out as places that they would not use. None of the participants reported to having used shelters. They had spent their nights with people they knew or strangers, in stairwells, stations and such but not in shelters. For Aino, shelters clearly represented the masculinized space. She had no personal experience from shelters but she had a very strong idea of shelters being "men's world":

> *I know that in our cliental the women we have spoken to that they don't want to go to shelters and such because there is an own cliental in there and they have used the shelters for years. But especially, like, young women, won't go there. And personally I have never agreed to go anywhere. I have never been there as I have always thought that it's like a men's world out there. And I really haven't want to go there so I have rather stayed in a stairwell. -Aino*

When asked if there were places in the city that felt especially unsafe, Maria answered shelters and housing services:

> *I haven't actually ever lived in these housing services or used shelters or anything but I have visited the Hietaniemenkatu's and Ruusulankatu's services and they have been very restless places. -Maria*

Aino also discussed the gendered experiences of using shelters. She told that drug using women do not generally get along with other women so using shelters was a very gendered experience for her.

> *Like, usually, as a drug using woman, you wouldn't get along with other women so I would somehow wish they would develop these services so that there would be one or two person rooms. Okay, I know, resource shortage and all that but to just actually get some peace and quiet. You could really get into that safety and get that alertness to even out so you could sleep. If you sleep with one eye open, it's not safe in any way.-Aino*

Seeing other women as a threat also shows how differently group is viewed in these situations than in those described by women that do not live a displaced life. In Koskela's theory women found other people and other women reliable but this was not the case for the participants.

Using shelters was seen as something that the women did not do. In Aino's experiences shelters were masculine spaces. And women's shelters were not something she would have considered using. Maria also felt that shelters were very restless and she did not use those services herself. This shows how shared knowledge and the reputation of a place and also personal experiences also formed how the women used space. While faced with little options as to where to spend the night, Aino would have

rather chosen stairwell than the shelter as for her, shelters were not a place she would have even considered.

As seen in the theory part of this thesis, women felt most fear in places such as parks, squares, hills, bus/railway stations, city centres, underpasses, bridges, dead end streets, some parks and forests, alleys, staircases, restaurants, some tunnels, shopping centres, underground stations. For homeless women, these places seemed to unfold very differently. For Aino, stairwells were a place where she found safety. For Maria, shopping centres and malls were places where she would frequently go to and she even spent nights there when she could. She felt very happy to have been able to spend a night in a mall. For Sylvia, the Pasila station was a very meaningful place in which she had spent a lot of time in and felt that it was a safe and peaceful place where she could watch other people go to and from work.

However, as homeless, Sylvia had also been very afraid of going to the forest. But as she gained more feelings of security after her homelessness journey, she felt very pleasant feelings towards forests. For the participants of this thesis, they did not really consider places that caused them fear. They recognized some places and situations as violent or possessing a threat of exploitation or violence but it did not keep them from using these spaces.

An interesting result was seeing how negatively the women saw shelters, whereas low-threshold places and day centers had been positive experiences for the women. There was an evident notion of shelters being masculinized spaces and the women had a lot of prejudices towards shelters.

4.6. Suggestions for the urban space

Suggestions for the urban space was discussed in order to form a more complete picture of the urban space and what it was lacking for these women while homeless. In Sylvia's and Maria's interviews there was an element of wishing that prejudices could be dismantled.

Saana: And, in a way, do you think that, in homelessness work and urban development we should hear more from people that have experienced these types of things, or?

Sylvia: Definitely. Yes, definitely. And.. It could help, with like, dismantling prejudices and stigmas too in a way, that those who have experienced those before in their lives would dare to come visible with it -Sylvia

Maria did not have any concrete suggestions for urban space but her wish was that there would be more understanding by others towards homelessness.

I can't really say anything concrete, maybe I wish that in a general discussion there would be a more understanding tone, like for example how diverse the problems are and what are some background factors. And then I sensed that there was this attitude that this is your own fault and your problems are your own fault and I believed it and couldn't really think otherwise. So maybe an attitude change or a change in the society's like structures… like a structural change is needed to gain a new perspective on how homelessness is viewed, like more as a problem than as a person or as a whole.-Maria

Aino felt like there should be more low threshold places for drug users and especially young drug users.

Well first of all, I feel like there should be more of these low threshold places like Symppis. Even in the city level for people using drugs, or young people using drugs. I have talked a lot about the youth because they are no more visible, even in our work, young people are doing worse and worse, and young people are homeless more, especially young women. And especially with youth centers being closed [due to COVID19] and the fact that drug users can't go to youth centers. So there could be low threshold places to people using drugs, day cafes and such. Okey, we do have those for homeless people but there should be more. And the service control is really important.-Aino

Sylvia and Aino felt that dismantling prejudices would be important things moving forward. All of the participants wished for a change in society's attitudes towards homelessness. Prejudices were seen as the most harmful practices for the women when they were experiencing homelessness.

The exclusion and shame seemed to be the most dominant variables affecting the women's using of the urban space. Their navigation through it and their personal maps of the urban spaces were heavily influenced by their childhood experiences, the exclusion and shame of their situation. Drug using was also a major influence in how city unfolded for these women. Gendered fear was not visible within the stories of the participants, except when discussing shelters which are prominently areas that are used by people experiencing homelessness.

Intersectionality is visible throughout the stories of the participants. Their experiences of the urban space have been deeply affected by myriad of things, not just being homeless. Childhood experiences, substance abuse, intimate partner violence, exclusion and many other things have affected their stories and shaped them. Their personal maps were formed through exclusion from the society, drug using, belonging to the reference group of homeless and gender in the instance of using shelters. Most importantly the use of the urban space was restricted in their mental maps' due to drug using, exclusion and shame. Fear was not mentioned as something that restricted the participants from using spaces.

5. Conclusion

This thesis sought to contribute to the discussions over the urban space of Helsinki, as well as over fear and intersectionality in geography. The urban space of Helsinki unfolded very differently for the women experiencing homelessness than Koskela's theory suggested. Intersectionality proved to be a useful tool in the thesis as the women told their stories of being faced as drug-users, as outsiders in the society and as women using shelters or finding other places to sleep at night.

There was an aim in this thesis to test out the geography of fear against the experiences that women experiencing homelessness had of the urban space. A major result was that the fear developed very differently to these women. Geography of fear cannot be implemented as such into the experiences of these women, as they did not feel fear in the same scope as the theory suggests. Also, their experiences with places in the urban space were very different than those women that have homes.

A significant result in this thesis is that vulnerability did not add fear in the cases of two of the participants. On the contrary, in their case, it seemed that they felt less fearful in the urban space from the women that had homes. Fearfulness was something they could not afford as they were more concerned with where to sleep and get food or money from. They felt very much under- or overstimulated all the time or they were concerned about surviving. Drug-using was also seen as a factor in how fear formed, or did not form, for them.

As stated in the theory section, fear is a major factor in discussions about the urban space. However, in the experiences of two of the participants in this thesis, fear was not something they even considered while they were experiencing homelessness. Their resources went elsewhere and they did not experience fear. By many notions explained in the theory section, vulnerable people are thought to be the most afraid. The women participating in this thesis lived a very displaced life, yet two out the three participants did not consider fear at all when they were homeless. This was not due to their personalities as it can be seen in the data that Maria did experience feelings of insecurity after her homelessness journey had ended. The reasons behind not feeling insecurity or fear were explained by drug using or being understimulated or overstimulated or feeling like survival was the most important thing.

Therefore fear cannot be the only factor taken into account when considering how the urban space unfolds for those living a displaced or marginalized life. Fear is a luxury that not everyone can afford and fearfulness is not the most prominent meter when measuring how inclusive or safe the urban space is. Koskela suggested that the feelings of insecurity being a bigger social issue than the actual, statistical risk of being a victim of violence. This thesis took part in the deconstructing of fear. The results show how differently fear formed for the women experiencing homelessness and how fear was not the most influential factor in how they used and perceived the urban space.

Very obvious difference to the theory was also in the places of fear. Many places that were marked as places that caused fear for the women in the theory, were places that the participants often used without hesitation. For example, women with homes found staircases scary, but for Aino staircases provided a place of rest and even some peacefulness. This shows how much not having a home or a place to sleep can change the perceptions over the urban space.

It was evident from the analysis that the women felt very excluded from using certain spaces in the city. However, the exclusion was not seen as gendered in any way, but rather the exclusion was caused by their situation at the time. They felt shame and isolation because of early experiences in life, lack of structures, drug using and homelessness. For the participants of this thesis the conflicts over the urban space appeared in the form of shame and the exclusion caused by shame. They felt alienated from certain areas and other people. They also experienced some banning from the societal level and feelings of not being welcome in the urban space. The participants' negative perceptions on shelters showed an example of the masculinization of the space. The participants felt that shelters were restless and "a man's world". They did not feel as though they could use them. This shows how masculinization over shelters is reproduced in the perceptions of these women.

The study of the urban space can reveal power dynamics of the society. For the participants of this thesis the power lied in the exclusive structures. The power was in the hands of those that held the power over their survival and the places to spend the night. Banning was done from the societal level in some cases. In some cases the boundaries were imagined, yet just as real for the participants.

5.1. Limitations of the research

The scope of the participants in this thesis set the most obvious limits to the research. With bigger sampling, there could have been a chance to make some generalizations on the issues. However, finding that many more women that had experienced homelessness and now worked as "experts" on the field is simply not possible in the scope of Finland. Also, the aim was never to make generalizations, but to experience the city through the eyes of (some) women that had experienced homelessness. However, as this research reveals that women experiencing homelessness perceive security and fear in a very different way than those with homes, bigger data could have provided a more convincing research result.

Also, the participants had had training to discuss their pathways through homelessness which could have influenced their stories. Walking in the city of Helsinki with women experiencing homelessness right now could have produced more in-depth and up to date knowledge on the topic but that option was ruled out due to ethical considerations. For another work than master's thesis, this could, however be a prominent research method.

5.2. Further research

Further research could be conducted on the feelings of security experienced by homeless women. The topic of insecurity and being afraid offered the most fruitful results in this thesis and further research could be conducted on the survival and the major change in feeling insecurity and being afraid that the participants had experienced. The shift in the use of space before and after their homeless journeys ended could provide a fruitful research.

Also, the notion that the women would not use shelters would be something that could be elaborated in the further research. Because the scope is so small, it is impossible to say whether this notion of shelters being very restless or masculinized space, is a general one or not.

As stated, in the methodology section of this thesis, there were some issues with the participants and calling them "expert by experience". Some of the participants felt as the experts by experience were told what to talk about by higher-ups. One participant felt that there were issues with the title. This could provide a very fruitful research in the future as using "experts by experience" has increased especially in the field of sociology in recent years.

5.3. Recommendations for policy and practice

A major finding in this thesis was that the participants did not experience fear in the scope that the theory suggests. Following this finding it could be suggested that there is a need to revisit how experienced fear influences policies and urban planning. Fear discourses are a major factor in urban planning and more discussions over how fear is formed could be beneficial in creating an environment that encourages equality within the urban space.

The participants suggestions for the urban space can be seen in the analysis chapter. They felt that urban planning should take into account the experiences of homelessness. They also felt that dismantling stigmas and prejudices would help and that there should more understanding towards homelessness. Maria felt that there should be a change in society's structures. Aino wished that there would be more low threshold places for drug users in the city.

As argued in the analysis section, sense of belonging was something that all of the women wished for when they were homeless. Urban planning has the power to create public spaces that encourage spontaneous encounters with other people. When a chance for that was presented in the form of "living room of Kontula", Maria had used it to meet other people. Finding connections to other people was very meaningful for the participants.

The participants valued low-threshold places and day centers that offered structures and a chance to rest. The missing structures was evident in all of the participants stories. They felt as though structures brought them safety.

With COVID19 bringing exclusion to a new high there needs to be discussions as to how exclusion can be tackled from the societal level. For many, facing others has become harder than ever in the history of modern society. There is a chance that COVID19 has changed drastically how fear is perceived in the society. These changes will not be visible right away and only time will tell how they will change our perception of the public space. However, there needs to be awareness to these possibly arising practices.

Resources

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