CHAPTER 10

Lived, Material and Planned Welfare: Mass-Produced Suburbanity in 1960s and 1970s Metropolitan Finland

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Introduction

In January 1965, our family moved to Kontula; father, mother, and two-and four-year-old children. Windows showed pines and rocks. On the other side of the house was small woodland and grazing cows. What an idyll! The cow pasture later became a sports field. [...] We felt like settlers. Everything was new, the environment and services still unfinished. Moving to a new home was a moment of celebration. There was space inside and outside, nature between the houses, windows opened onto wide views. Although the houses were high, there was a feeling that we lived amidst nature.[1]

[1] Helsinki City Archives, HKA, from now on HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 69.

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The mass-produced suburbs, with their high-quality homes, playgrounds, shopping centers, and forest paths, became key environments in which the emerging welfare state and the peak years of urbanization were lived in the 1960s and the 1970s. The author of the above quote, who moved to Kontula suburb as a young mother in 1965, recalled an experientially and architecturally new kind of urban space 30 years later.[2] The passage crystallizes several themes shared in the suburbanites' memoirs: the joy of a new dwelling, an optimistic pioneer spirit, and the omnipresence of nature. Indirectly, it discusses experiential relations between inhabitants and their new environment. Kontula was one of the almost 50 suburbs built in the metropolitan Helsinki region in the 1960s and 1970s. When completed in the early 1970s, it was the largest uniformly built residential area in Finland with over 20,000 inhabitants, equaling a contemporary midsized Finnish town.[3]

Post-war Finland urbanized rapidly through becoming suburbanized, a process which transformed rural and natural landscapes outside the existing urban fabric into a patchwork of new suburbs, literally moving housing into the forest. After the Second World War, the housing shortage was acute, and dwellings in Helsinki were cramped and poorly equipped compared to Western European standards.[4] New international suburban principles were adapted to the Finnish context as a key solution for the urban housing shortage. The suburban development began in the late 1940s and was most intensive from the 1960s to the mid-1970s, in the epoch of suburban mass-production. During the period of the most intense urbanization and migration (1965–1975) masses of people moved from the northern and eastern countryside to new suburbs in the Helsinki region, other urban centers of southern Finland, and abroad to Sweden. In a few decades, the ratio of the rural and urban populations was turned on its head. In 1945, almost 70 percent of Finland's population lived in the countryside, but by 1980, nearly 60 percent lived in the cities.[5] By 1980,

[2] She recorded her memories in the writing competition "Life in the Suburbs" (*Elämää lähiöissä*) arranged by the major newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* in 1995–1996. HKA, LS 1995.

[3] Kuokkanen-Suomi, L. and Salastie, R. (1995). *Kontula aluerakentamisen mallikohteena*. Helsingin kaupunkisuunnitteluviraston julkaisuja 1995:12. Helsingin kaupunki, 4–5.

[4] Vihavainen, M. and Kuparinen, V. (2006). *Asuminen Helsingissä 1950–2004*. Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskuksen verkkojulkaisuja 34. Helsingin kaupunki, 14.

[5] Alestalo, M. (1985). Yhteiskuntaluokat ja sosiaaliset kerrostumat toisen maailmansodan jälkeen. In T. Valkonen et al. (eds.), *Suomalaiset*. WSOY, 102–106.

Photo 10.1 Dramatic contrast of forest and large building blocks in Pihlajamäki, Finland, 1959–1965 (Photograph: Volker von Bonin 1965, Helsinki City Museum)

the suburban high-rise flat had replaced the wooden rural house as the typical Finnish home.[6] The modes and experiences of habitation and urban planning, urban structure, and the very notion of urbanity changed fundamentally (Photo 10.1).

Our chapter explores new suburbs built in the 1960s and the 1970s in the Helsinki region as lived environments, where built and unbuilt surroundings, planning visions, suburban imagery, and residents come together. With a particular focus on the early years of these suburbs, we concentrate on four socio-spatial locations that were central both in recalled and material environments: homes, yards, neighborhood services, and natural surroundings. How did suburbanites, their life situations and expectations, built suburbs and planning visions meet in the 1960s and 1970s? How did the meanings of suburban environments take shape in these encounters? How did the materialized suburban environments in turn create understandings and experiences of the welfare environment? Our discussion builds on a dialogic analysis of suburbanites' written

[6] Mäkiö, E. (1994). *Kerrostalot 1960–1975*. Rakennustietosäätiö, 14–15.

memoirs, visual and textual sources, and the on-site inspection of suburbs. The cross-exposure of different perspectives allows us to recognize the plurality and inconsistencies of lived, material, and envisioned suburbs.[7] Instead of the dichotomy between planners as the active creators of the built environment and the residents as the passive users and experiencers of the finished environment, we suggest that the formation of suburban environments and their meanings was a complex process.

Suburbs Revisited

Suburbs, symbolic landscapes of modern, urban Finland, have represented both the future-oriented optimism of rising material welfare and the pessimism of the emptying countryside and post-welfare disappointment.[8] Until the late 1960s, suburbs embodied the contemporary architectural and social ideals of a new kind of healthy, child-friendly living close to nature in contrast to the densely built city centers. Then both professional and public views on suburbs changed abruptly and condemned the mass-produced suburbs as aesthetic and social failures. Passionate criticism coincided with the most intense period of suburban construction.[9] The views of suburbs as aesthetically monotonous concrete deserts, "similar despite their locations,"[10] abound in research and the media, portraying suburbanites as mere victims of their passivating environment. However, the suburbanites' written memoirs collected since the 1990s provide a radically different perspective—at the same time more positive, heterogeneous, and rough—highlighting the so far unrecognized qualities of the suburban environments.

There is no independent existence of the suburbs—or any built environment—without the dwellers inhabiting it. Suburbanites not only experienced but also shaped suburban environments and their meanings through their embodied activities and perceptions. They brought in their

[7] Lefebvre, H. (1974). *La production de l'espace*. Anthropos, 48–49.

[8] Miettunen, K.-M. (2009). *Menneisyys ja historiakuva: Suomalainen kuusikymmentäluku muistelijoiden rakentamana ajanjaksona*. SKS, 224–226.

[9] Roivainen, I. (1999). *Sokeripala metsän keskellä: Lähiö sanomalehden konstruktiona*. Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskus, 60; Saarikangas, K. (2014a). Sandboxes and heavenly dwellings: Gender, agency, and modernity in lived suburban spaces in the Helsinki metropolitan area in the 1950s and 1960s. *Home Cultures* 11(1), 38.

[10] Kervanto Nevanlinna, A. (2005). *Näköaloja kadunkulmalta*. SKS, 23

housing histories and negotiated with the new environment.[11] Reciprocally, a built environment is never a mere neutral backdrop of habitation but engenders meanings as an actant itself.[12] Spatial arrangements generate, support, or interfere with socio-spatial practices and provide "pathways for habits."[13] More precisely, the lived suburban environments only appeared in those processes of intra-action.[14]

A unique body of written memoirs about suburban life in the Helsinki region was collected in writing competitions between 1995 and 2017. It allows us to approach—if not reach—the experiential dimensions of the suburbs. About 200 contributors from different social groups recalled how they lived in the suburbs of the 1960s and 1970s during those decades.[15] The majority of contributors returned to the formative years of their lives. More than half recalled their childhood and youth, while the rest, with a few exceptions, recalled their lives as young mothers or fathers. Three quarters of the authors were women.

A new type of urban space lives and breathes in the memoirs. Contributors revisited their personal places of memory, moving from one affective location to another in the reciprocal relationship between space, sensations, and memory—a characteristic feature of memorial narration.[16] The process of writing re-created suburban environments and evoked affective, corporeal place and sense-memories, and made deeply personal experiences shared by suburban generations. The suburban landscapes unfolded into a palimpsest of invisible, already vanished features of "what

[11] de Certeau, M. (1980). *L'invention du quotidien 1. arts de faire*. Gallimard, folio essais, 139–142.

[12] Foucault, M. (1974). *Surveiller et punir : Naissance de la prison*. Gallimard, 174; Latour, B. (2007). *Reassembling the Social*. Oxford UP, 32–33.

[13] Young, I. M. (1997). *Intersecting voices: Dilemmas of gender, political philosophy, and policy*. Princeton UP, 150.

[14] Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke UP, 175–178.

[15] The largest collection, "Life in the Suburbs" by *Helsingin Sanomat* in 1995–1996, covered the entire Helsinki region: 168 of 211 entrants depict life in the 35 suburbs of the 1960s and 1970s during those decades. "Story of Kontula" (*Kontulan tarina*) in 2000 (Archives of the Finnish Literature Society, SKS, KRA Kontula 2000) concentrated on the biggest Finnish suburb of the 1960s. Nineteen of the 32 entrants depict the 1960s and 1970s. "Suburban childhood" (*Lapsuus lähiöissä*) in 2017 covered the whole of Finland (SKS, KRA Lähiö 2017). Sixteen of the 72 entrants depict the Helsinki region's suburbs in the 1960s and 1970s.

[16] Casey E. S. (1987). *Remembering: A phenomenological study*. Indiana UP, 186–187; Assmann, A. (2011). *Cultural memory and Western civilization: Functions, media, archives*. Cambridge UP, 8.

used to be there."[17] The accounts often follow the same pattern, starting with the relocation to a new suburb and moving to particular sites and details.

Contributors wrote out their memories in the context of a wider web of cultural meanings and suburban meta-narratives, constructing and reconstructing their own historical pasts. Suburban visions, construction, reputation, and their changes are the frames through which suburbanites of different ages recalled suburban life. They offered counter-narratives from "real people" who lived in the suburbs to those experts who "have not even stepped" in the criticized suburbs, thus challenging their negative reputation.[18] Despite the strikingly positive overall tone, the memoirs do not represent suburbs as unambiguously happy places but portray their drawbacks and rough sides, too. As our chapter will show, suburbs emerged as stratified, multi-sensory environments quintessentially formed in the reciprocity of modern architecture, wider built and unbuilt surroundings, and inhabitants.

Material and Planned Suburban Welfare

> New residential areas are being created one suburb at a time. A deserted forest island is zoned, machines and builders rush against it and in a couple of years the former forest will be home to thousands of citizens.[19]

Suburbanization was both an international and local phenomenon occurring simultaneously in Europe and the United States.[20] In Europe, the reconstruction effort created a need for a thorough redesign of the physical urban fabric. The pursuit of improving people's lives through the improvement of their immediate living environment brought housing to the center of international architectural modernism. A decentralized urban structure and neighborhood units measured by walking distance between homes and schools were rapidly adopted as the key principles for urban

[17] de Certeau (1984), 108; Massey, D. (2005). *For Space*. Sage, 124.

[18] An author who moved from the city center to Jakomäki at the age of six in 1969. HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 107.

[19] Lehtisalo, J. (1963, April 26). Helsinki hiipii sivuun. *Uusi Kuvalehti*, 13.

[20] Wakeman, R. (2016). *Practicing utopia: An intellectual history of the new town movement*. The University of Chicago Press, 1–3; Söderqvist, E. (2008). *Att gestalta välfärd: Från ide till byggd miljö*. Forskningsrådet Formas, 20.

planning.[21] The genealogy of Finnish suburbs synthesized various international planning aspirations for healthy urban living: early twentieth-century Anglo-Saxon garden cities, hygienic minimal dwellings, and the spatial differentiation of inter-war German *Siedlungen*, Le Corbusier's "towers in the park," US socially and spatially defined neighborhood units (C. A. Perry), traffic separation (Radburn), and greenbelts (Greenbelt). The architectural critic Lewis Mumford's ideals of harmonious, green neighborhoods and British *New Towns* outlined in renowned London plans (1943, 1944, P. Abercrombie) were instrumental in bringing these ideas together.[22] Suburban theories and Mumfordian ideals translated into a built landscape particularly strongly in Sweden and Finland.[23] The general plans of Stockholm (1944–1952) and Helsinki (1953–1960) and its regions ("Ameba" plan 1959–1961/1968) further developed these ideals. While these plans were not confirmed officially, their visions guided land use planning and the implementation of suburban principles until the early 1970s.

Tapiola (Espoo), established in 1951, was the most ambitious and unique Finnish suburban utopia materializing the views of the most ardent Finnish advocates of suburban ideology—the democratic, nature-rich miniature society by housing reformer Heikki von Hertzen and topographic planning principles emphasizing the harmony of nature and architecture by architect Otto-I. Meurman.[24] Together with Stevenage *New Town* in Britain (1946–) and Vällingby (1954–) in Stockholm (Sweden), it became the international poster child of modern urban planning and a showcase of modern Finland. Its fame turned the suburban ideology into a national ideology (Photo 10.2).[25]

Following the local adaption of new international visions, Finnish suburbs typically combined sparsely arranged medium and high-rise apartment buildings in forestry landscapes, dubbed forest suburbs. The construction of Helsinki region suburbs can be roughly divided into three intermingling phases. In the intimate forest suburbs of the 1950s, roads

[21] Wakeman (2016), 51–52.

[22] Mumford, L. (1938). *The Culture of Cities*; Saarikangas, K. (2002). *Asunnon muodonmuutoksia. Puhtauden estetiikka ja sukupuoli modernissa arkkitehtuurissa*. SKS, 391–394; Wakeman (2016), 79–82.

[23] Söderqvist (2008), 41.

[24] von Hertzen, H. (1946). *Koti vaiko kasarmi lapsillemme*. WSOY; Meurman, O-I. (1947) *Asemakaavaoppi*. WSOY.

[25] Saarikangas (2002), 398–400.

Photo 10.2 Landscape designers reshaped the old meadow into Tapiola's distinctive and popular open green heart (*Silkkiniitty*). Housing hides in plantings and forest strips (Photograph: Teuvo Kanerva 1966, KAMU Espoo City Museum)

and the placement of buildings followed the shapes of the terrain, with planted and wild nature overlapping seamlessly. In the 1960s, housing production industrialized rapidly and the scale grew monumentally. The forest suburbs of the 1960s continued the sparse topographic layout and the porous continuum of private, semi-public, and public spaces of the 1950s. The repetitive aesthetics favored architectural unity, simplicity, and an industrial outlook. Instead of hiding buildings in nature, big white buildings were contrasted with nature considered original. The following denser compact cities emphasized social encounters instead of nature, relying on the modular grid structure and the ideal of rebuilt,

human-made nature.[26] Both forestry-rich environment and reinterpreted grid formula were distinctive features of Finnish mass-produced suburbs. The rapid creation of 60 suburbs in pristine terrain was a new planning experience, allowing designers to realize new aesthetic ideals freely. Planners, journalists, and inhabitants shared the sense of the powerful emergence of a new living environment and growing prosperity in the future-oriented emotional climate.

Suburban development initiated national and urban housing policy, in which the state and municipalities were the key players. State-subsidized, modest-rate Arava loans (1949) were pivotal in combatting the housing shortage. They shifted the focus of housing policy from rural to urban areas for the first time and accelerated the construction of suburbs.[27] The long-term housing policy of the emerging welfare state saw the light in the mid-1960s with the onset of the great migration. The Housing Act (1966) that consolidated the duties of the thus far temporary Arava and the housing program (1966–1975), comparable with the Swedish Million Program (1965–1974), produced 500,000 new dwellings of an average size of 70 m^2.[28] Between the 1950s and the 1970s, Arava loans and the accompanying building regulations covered almost half of the housing construction in Helsinki.[29]

The wellbeing of families with children and the children themselves as future citizens in a pleasant, nature-rich environment became the cornerstones of Finnish suburban planning. While nature was within walking distance even in the center of Helsinki, housing reformers condemned its cramped housing, shady blocks, and lack of proper play spaces as an unsuitable living environment. Instead, they sought to create beautiful and safe

[26] Saarikangas, K. (2014b). Lähiötilan kerrokset ja vyöhykkeet: Rakennukset ja ympäristö pääkaupunkiseudun 1950–1970-luvun lähiöissä. In S. Knuuttilla and U. Piela (eds.), *Ympäristömytologia*. SKS, 347–351; Hautamäki, R. and Donner, Julia (2019). Representations of nature: The shift from forest town to compact city in Finland. *Bebyggelsehistorisk tidskrift* (76), 44–62; Hautamäki, R. and Donner, J. (2022). Modern living in the forest suburb: Landscape architecture of Finnish forest suburbs in the 1940s–1960s. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 104 (3), 262. Retrieved May 23, 2022, from https://doi.org/10.1080/04353684.2021.1989320.

[27] Palomäki, A. (2011). *Juoksuhaudoista jälleenrakennukseen*. Tampere UP, 13–23, 413–425.

[28] Mäenpää, J. (1968). *Asuntopolitiikkamme ja sen tavoitteet*. Tammi, 50; Juntto, A. (1990). *Asuntokysymys Suomessa: Topeliuksesta tulopolitiikkaan*. Asuntohallitus, 208, 261–270, 408; Hård. M. (2010). The good apartment: The social (democratic) construction of Swedish homes. *Home Cultures* 7(2), 120.

[29] Vihavainen and Kuparinen (2006), 16–17.

neighborhoods nurturing the holistic wellbeing of the residents with their generous services and green spaces for healthy outdoor activities, echoing the housing reform discussions about the “curative dwelling” and “curable city” that had been ongoing since the late nineteenth century.[30] Suburban protagonists hoped that a new democratic generation would grow up in the village-like neighborhood of the new suburbs in contrast to anonymous masses of industrial cities, producing whole towns “for everyone, where the children of blue-collar workers go to school with the children of white-collar workers.”[31] The exact meaning of wellbeing remained open, however. A new Finnish term for suburb, *asumalähiö* (literally live close by), introduced by Meurman as a translation of neighborhood unit, combined the function and the location, emphasizing closeness.[32] In the 1960s, the abbreviated term *lähiö* became a general term for various spacious apartment building areas outside the city.

In the 1960s, the suburban perimeter expanded to the neighboring rural municipalities of Espoo and Vantaa (until 1972 Helsinge) within a radius of 10–20 kilometers from the center of Helsinki. In two decades, both municipalities transformed from the countryside into towns of suburban clusters. One author recalled his removal to the landscape dotted with suburbs: “Already when we looked at the residential area, we wondered why we had to go so far into the woods, when there were a lot of empty areas along the way.”[33] In the mid-1960s, the modes of constructing residential areas changed. Based on the so-called housing-area development contracts with the municipalities and banks, construction companies bought land and produced entire residential areas from scratch. Espoo and Vantaa became the largest users of such contracts in Finland given their tiny planning organizations. Moreover, private landowners owned most of the land, selling it eagerly to the construction companies.[34] While area development contracts gained a bad reputation, they produced

[30] Saarikangas (2002), 59–79; Gandy, M. (2002). *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City*. MIT Press, 4–7.

[31] von Hertzen, H. and Spreiregen, P. D. (1971). *Building a New Town: Finland’s New Garden City*. MIT Press, 1; von Hertzen, H. (1956). Tapiolan puutarhakaupungin suunnittelusta. *Arkkitehti* 1–2/1956, 1–2; Saarikangas (2002), 390; Wakeman (2016), 34.

[32] Meurman, (1947), 77–79; Meurman, O-I. (1950). Asumasolu ja asumalähiö. *Asuntopolitiikka* 1950, 6–7.

[33] HKA, LS 1995, Espoo 3. An author who moved from Kontula to Iivisniemi in 1968 as a young father.

[34] Maisala, P. (2008). *Espoo – oma lukunsa: Kaupunkisuunnittelun, kaupunkirakentamisen ja kaavoitushallinnon kehitys vuoteen 2000*. Espoon kaupunkisuunnittelukeskus, 66–67; Hankonen, J. (1994). *Lähiöt ja tehokkuuden yhteiskunta*. Gaudeamus, 378–395.

Photo 10.3 Kaivoksela (1961–1967) was both a first apartment building suburb in Vantaa and a pioneer suburb of area development contracts. It combined big buildings with forests and large yards divided into lawns, forest strips, and areas for parking and playing (Photograph: Lauri Leppänen 1965, Vantaa City Museum)

a wide range of residential areas from ascetic to good, down-to-earth living environments, the qualities of which are still largely unexplored and unrecognized (Photo 10.3).

Simultaneously, the aesthetic and social paradigms of suburban planning changed dramatically. Architects, social scientists, and journalists criticized the inefficient land use of forest suburbs as a social utopia. Urban designers reshaped the grid structure of old Finnish wooden towns to the efficient, large-scale suburban frame of compact cities. Welfare and society became closely linked as the focus of housing discussions shifted from citizens to society, and from unmeasurable everyday wellbeing to measurable and equal societal welfare. The features of a good living environment changed from sunshine, fresh air, and greenery to vitality, stimuli, and efficiency, while the scope of discussion broadened from the healthy outdoor life of children to the social contacts of adults.[35] Ideally, if not in practice, the entire terrain of compact cities was leveled, pedestrian and

[35] *Asuntonäyttely* 1966. Suomen rakennustaiteen museo, Asuntoreformiyhdistys, 36–37.

vehicle traffic strictly separated horizontally and vertically, housing lifted to concrete decks, and nature rebuilt. The town plan frame of Koivukylä (1968–1969) in Vantaa by a multi-professional team exemplified the change. While the ambitious plan was schematically implemented, it was highly influential as a widely used model.[36] Moreover, the demand for clear urban space with streets and squares separated private, semi-public, and public spaces visually instead of there being a fluid continuum in the forest suburbs. Planners believed that density in itself would support copious services and generate a vibrant social life by bringing residents, services, and working back close to each other.[37] The new design practices and vocabulary demonstrated the change. Teams of a new generation of designers planned larger entities than before. Mass-production required construction processes, site arrangements, and the exact location of buildings to be determined in advance, and the efforts to increase social contacts required the calculation of pedestrian collision points. More importantly, the urban design horizon expanded from town planning to the entire society.[38]

A Leap in the Standards of Housing

> It was like arriving in heaven! We had our own apartment of 45.5 square meters, with two rooms and a kitchenette! We had a bathroom with hot water and our own balcony! There was light and splendid views from the eighth floor. And our very own turn to use the building's sauna on Fridays from 5 to 6:30 pm![39]

The joy of modern dwellings is tangible in the memoirs. Compared to the small, crowded apartments in the city of Helsinki, of which 70 percent had no more than one room and a kitchen, 60 percent lacked hot water, and 50 percent lacked bathrooms in the 1950s, the change was significant.[40] Extensive suburban construction provided affordable, good quality homes, and more space for a large number of people, and it turned

[36] *Koivukylä 1: Kaavarunkotyön perusselvitykset* (1968). Helsingin maalaiskunta; *Koivukylä 2: Kaavarunkosuunnitelma* (1969). Helsingin maalaiskunta.

[37] *Asuntonäyttely 66* (1966), 32–33.

[38] *Asuntonäyttely 66* (1966), 18–19; Mäenpää, J. (1968), 19.

[39] An author who moved to Pihlajamäki as a young mother in 1965. HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 45.

[40] Vihavainen and Kuparinen (2006), 14.

modern facilities from rarities to self-evident features in three decades. More than 200,000 well-equipped suburban dwellings were constructed in the Helsinki region between 1950 and 1980. In 1980, they housed 550,000 people, which was 75 percent of the region's population.[41]

The norm of the functionalist family dwelling of a separate kitchen, living room, and bedroom for the parents and children dictated the layout of apartments.[42] The model, echoing the ideals of turn-of-the-century housing reformers, was adopted as an international (*Comission du Logement Familial*, 1957) and national goal for family dwellings as in Pekka Kuusi's *Social policy of the '60*s (1961), which directed Finnish welfare thinking.[43] The serial production of similar housing types and identical dwellings fitted into the need for efficient construction and the ideals of social equality. Only the size of homes and the number of bedrooms increased, from an average of 50 m^2 with one bedroom in the 1950s to some 60 m^2 with two bedrooms in the 1960s and 70 m^2 with three bedrooms in the 1970s, the largest apartments having four bedrooms.[44] Given the shrinking size of households, children in the 1970s were increasingly able to enjoy their own room.

Most of those who moved to the modern suburban apartments were young middle- and working-class families with children "hit by suburban fever."[45] Initially, most families moved from the apartments in the city center considered outdated and unhealthy, a process highlighted in the memoirs: "Almost all the families that I knew had moved into the building from the cramped and poorly equipped apartments of central Helsinki."[46] In the mid-1960s, new residents started to come from the countryside

[41] Vihavainen and Kuparinen (2006), 7; *Espoon kaupungin tilastollinen vuosikirja 1971* (1972), 3, 23–25; *Espoon kaupungin tilastollinen vuosikirja 1977* (1978), 3–27; *Espoon kaupungin tilastollinen vuosikirja 1981* (1982), 6, 40–44; Vantaan kaupunki (1975). *Vantaan tilastollinen vuosikirja 1974* (1975) 15, 24–29; *Vantaan tilastollinen vuosikirja 1980*, (1981), 37–44.

[42] Saarikangas, K. and Horelli, L. (2018). Modern home, environment, and gender: Built, planned, and lived spaces in post-war Finland. In A. Staub (ed.), *Routledge companion to modernity, space and gender*. Routledge, (2018), 51–55.

[43] Kuusi, P. (1961). *60-luvun sosiaalipolitiikka*. WSOY, 136–137, 147–150, 171; Juntto (1990), 243.

[44] Juntto (1990), 233; Vihavainen and Kuparinen (2006), 11.

[45] An author who moved from the city center to Hakunila at the age of nine in 1972. HKA, LS 1995, Vantaa 51.

[46] An author who moved from the city center to Pihlajamäki at the age of three in 1962. HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 46.

and other suburbs.[47] For them the experience of living in a flat itself was new. Sounds and smells brought neighbors into the home. "I was frightened by the sounds behind the walls. Bumps, dragging, muttering. Somebody walked above. A door opened on the staircase. The balcony was frightening."[48]

The ownership of a new suburban home was not self-evident, but marked a step ahead in life. Despite intense construction, there was not enough housing for everyone, and loan conditions were strict. As modern representatives of romanticized peasant virtues, contributors achieved suburban homes through hard work, self-denial, and steady saving: "By eating soup, my mother and father saved for a state-subsidized Arava home in Kontula. The studio changed into a three-room apartment."[49] Although residents often selected the suburb randomly based on where housing was available, most of them settled down in their new neighborhood (Photo 10.4).

Modern amenities had a radical impact on daily life and were most tangibly lived in the kitchens and bathrooms. Young mothers in particular praised the pleasures of piped water and practical kitchens with gas or electric ranges as "a dream come true." Refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and other domestic appliances became widespread during the 1960s. Well-equipped homes saved labor, set new standards for clean homes, and created new everyday practices.[50] Those who moved into the suburbs as children rejoiced at the bathrooms to the degree that they are called the "bathtub generation."[51] "For us children the bathtub was the best thing of all. We hadn't had one previously. There were outright fights to decide who would be the first to take a bath, and I think we already took baths on the first day."[52]

[47] Pulma, P. (2000). Kasvun katveessa. *Helsingin historia vuodesta 1945 2*, Helsingin kaupunki, 123–129.

[48] An author who moved from a wooden house to Pihlajamäki apartment at the age of eight in 1965. HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 41.

[49] An author who moved from the city center to Kontula at the age of five in 1965. HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 72.

[50] Saarikangas (2014a), 43–48.

[51] Kesänen, J. (2002). *Siilitien tarinat*. SKS, 12–13.

[52] An author who moved from the city center to Kontula at the age of 11 in 1966. SKS, KRA, Kontula 2000, 135.

Photo 10.4 Residents moving to Karakallio (Espoo) in December 1965. Well-designed, spacious and practical suburban dwellings democratized housing (Photograph: U. A. Saarinen, The Labour Archives)

The new home was a key motive for moving to the suburbs. However, contributors wrote more about suburban outdoors as homes stretched beyond their physical borders into the yards and nearby nature.

Socio-Spatial Suburban Hubs

> The best thing, however, is that we Kontula people grew up here with the settlement. We saw how this suburb was built up almost out of the blue, and each new building and service point was like a personal gift.[53]

[53] An author who moved from Lauttasaari to Kontula as a young mother in 1965. HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 67.

The first inhabitants moved to the suburbs while they were still under construction. The suburban construction was not just about housing, but about creating an entire living environment. The works took years, services and roads were poor, the terrain was milled, and buses ran rarely. The landscape was changing constantly. Nearby forests and fields gave way as new buildings sprouted before the residents' eyes. Suburban services were designed to support their main function, habitation, and the daily lives of families with children—household care, nurture, education, and outdoor recreation—whereas polluting industry was located outside the suburbs. The range and location of services embodied the gendered and family-centered approach of suburban planning: The more services were needed, the closer they ought to be to homes (Photo 10.5).

A pioneering spirit and a sense of relief when services gradually improved mark the memoirs. Contributors negotiated amid the incompleteness: "We felt like settlers. The environment and services were still incomplete, but I don't remember it ever bothering us. We adjusted our lives according to that. This was indeed only an interim phase."[54] The most important services were shopping centers, ground-floor stores, schools, kindergartens, churches, playgrounds, sports fields, and parks. Their range varied hugely. Ground-floor stores, common in the early 1960s, usually opened first. Shop, bank, and library buses provided provisional services; schools and churches operated in temporary barracks. The few public buildings were stretched for several purposes. Schools, shopping centers, and cellars offered space for libraries, sports, cinema, parish work, and gatherings, and vice versa, kindergartens, hobbies, and cinemas operated in new kinds of multipurpose churches.[55] In the 1970s, new welfare policies started to materialize in buildings for municipal services, such as libraries, swimming pools, and day and health care centers.

As important suburban landmarks, public buildings created local suburban identity and pride.[56] Shopping centers, a new suburban building type, rapidly emerged as the spatial, social, and emotive hearts of suburbs. They were key spaces for the suburban experience of the growing material welfare and consumer culture. With their atrium yards, large display

[54] An author who moved from the city center to Kontula in 1965 as a young mother. HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 69.

[55] Ortiz-Nieminen, O. (2021). *Kaikenlaiselle toiminnalle tilaa riittää, kaikenlaisille seurakuntalaisille paikkoja on*. Helsingin yliopisto, 329–334, 363–364.

[56] Hayden, D. (1995). *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. MIT Press, 11.

Photo 10.5 Iivisniemi suburb rising in the forest in 1967 (Photographer unknown, KAMU Espoo City Museum)

windows shining in the darkened evenings, and new self-service stores, they represented modern life and the freedom of choice (Photo 10.6).

However, everyday life was more complex than the designers had envisioned. Coping with limited services required daily effort and creativity. During the 1960s, only in the most remote suburbs shops were allowed to remain open until 6 pm, supporting gendered domestic practices. One author, who moved away from the abundant services of the city center to Puotila in 1961, recalled:

> Even going to the store took a lot of time with the kids. The mothers usually had to take care of that too, as the shops were only open until five in the afternoon and the fathers did not come home until about five or six.[57]

[57] HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 33.

Photo 10.6 The shopping center of Kontula by architect Aili Laurila-Tandefelt (1967) was located at the mathematical center of the suburb, easily accessible by foot and car. The lively suburban heart was advertised as the largest in the Nordic countries (Photograph: Eeva Rista 1970, Helsinki City Museum)

From the mid-1960s, shopping centers grew in size and started to move from the hearts to the outskirts of suburbs, and from the intersection of daily pedestrian routes close to busy entrance roads. As key shapers of the community structure, central stores favored large shopping centers as opposed to ground-floor stores, also considered unsuitable for prefabricated building frames.[58] The great visions of street life along the bustling pedestrian promenades of compact cities were thus watered down. Simultaneously, women's increased employment, the five-day working week, growing economic welfare, and the number of cars transformed socio-spatial practices and created new routines. Saturday became the maintenance day of households and shopping day for bigger weekly supplies, and the store could be even further away when accessed by car.[59]

[58] Hankonen (1994), 252–254.
[59] Lehtonen, T.-K. (1999). *Rahan vallassa*. Tutkijaliitto, 54–56.

Against the common view, suburbs did not lack working places completely. Many women worked from home on a part-time basis in bookkeeping, cleaning, or childcare—work that the statistics do not reflect well.[60] In addition, construction, schools, shopping centers, churches, and traffic brought work into the suburbs. The industrial areas between the suburbs, in turn, were completed only years after the housing. Hence, few suburbanites found work near their home.

Day care was an acute problem until the 1990s. The Day Care Act (1973) required municipalities to provide day care facilities, but their construction proceeded slowly. One author, who moved to Pihlajamäki in 1965 as a young mother, recalled the tight arrangement:

> When our younger child was 18 months old, I was offered the opportunity to get an evening job as a telex writer. My husband got permission to leave home half an hour earlier from work. We switched childcare shifts on the fly. Often I was already in the yard ready to leave when he came.[61]

Children would spend their days and time after school by themselves "with a key around their necks" before parents returned home from work, and they would even start school early:

> I was apparently forced to go to school at the age of six. The previous year, the day care had been arranged so that after longing (alone) at home in the morning, I went to lunch with the upstairs neighbor and waited until the end of the afternoon for my sister to arrive from school.[62]

Children and adults experienced the incomplete environment differently. Children experienced suburbs as the centers of life, "their own worlds, with joys and sorrows."[63] Everything they needed was close by. They lived with the lack of services in the crowded schools that often operated in temporary barracks and in shifts, and they ate lunch at their school desks. One author, who moved from the city center to Kannelmäki in her early teens in 1960, contrasted her mother's experience with her own:

[60] Saarikangas (2014a), 57.

[61] HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 45.

[62] An author who moved to Karakallio in 1968 at the age of five. HKA, LS 1995, Espoo 7.

[63] An author who moved from the city center to Puotinharju at the age of nine in 1963. SKS, KRA 2017, Lähiö 37.

> For my mother, the new suburb was like a penal colony. Shops were far away, one always had to take a bus, and the bus stops too were far away. Instead, for me a new life began! [...] On the first day, there was immediately a herd of children asking me out. And what playgrounds were here. The fields of Malminkartano with cows and pigs, with good cross-country ski terrain in winter, and lots of friends.[64]

While her mother felt isolated, the author above enjoyed the yard life and an abundance of friends.

Abundant Yard Life

> As a child, I never wanted to leave our yard. There was everything one could want: rocks, trees, bushes, crocuses, sandboxes, swings, playhouses, slides and 'the greens.' 'The greens' were a climbing frame (...) Yes, I noticed that our house was not necessarily the most beautiful possible, and building a nine-story house on a high hill was not the best solution for the landscape, but the views for us were stunning. Soukka, our building and its yard, still mean for me my childhood home with all the longing memories. And even now I like gravel more than a lawn.[65]

For children, the yard was important—perhaps the single most important—place of the suburb. In the memoirs, yards appeared as children's paradises and multi-sensory homelike hearts from which to explore and expand the territory. "One never had to be alone. Every time one went to the yard, a pal saw it from the window and came out."[66] The authors highlighted affectively the sounds, smells, atmospheres, and outdoor mobility in yards and the wider natural surroundings. As several studies on childhood's spatial experiences and reminiscences have pointed out, the multi-sensory perception of the environment and the emergence of place and sense-memories are markedly powerful in childhood, and vice versa, the corporeal and sensory spatial childhood memories are sensitive to unfold.[67]

Young families with children found company among others in a similar life situation. Children provided a bond between adults: "At the shop, my

[64] HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 29.

[65] An author who grew up in the Soukka in the 1970s. HKA, LS 1995, Espoo 38.

[66] An author who was born in Puotinharju in 1966. HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 52.

[67] Edensor, T. (2005). *Industrial ruins: Space, aesthetics and materiality*. Berg, 144–145; Halldén, G. (2009). Barndomsminnen och naturminnen. In G. Halldén (ed.), *Naturen som symbol för den goda barndomen*. Carlsson Bokförlag, 156.

mother got to know people, who were always the mothers or fathers of someone or other."[68] Those who were young mothers depict yards and sandboxes as the locations for informal encounters, neighborliness, and friendship. One author, who moved to Pihlajamäki as a young mother in 1963, wrote: "Mothers socialized with each other next to the sandboxes. There was a good spirit of mutual assistance among the mothers—one could take turns and leave one's children in someone else's care if there were things to do in the city."[69]

In suburban criticism, however, the sandbox became a key symbol of idle suburban housewives. While suburban planning was based on a narrow, heavily gendered view of domesticity, it is obvious that suburban criticism disregarded the agency and social networks of mothers.[70] The critics failed to recognize the positive aspects of women's socializing, labeling it "gossiping" around the sandbox.[71] The critics furthermore considered suburbs themselves as less valued, passive, reproductive, and feminine spaces compared to the cities, which were valued as active, productive, and masculine.[72]

The voices of children created a distinctive suburban soundscape. For children in the yard, mothers often figured in the background. They could be called "to the window," from where they "dropped dolls and teddy bears and small mats, bananas, cups, and bowls, and cried out advice, warnings, and instructions."[73] Spatial arrangements and practices between the home and yard reinforced and shaped the connection between children, mothers, and the suburban environment envisioned by architects. Balconies and windows often overlooked the yard where small children played, allowing adults—usually mothers—to keep an eye on what was happening from inside the apartment. They joined the indoors and the outdoors, making the home and yard extensions of each other (Photo 10.7). However, children also found the wild yard life scary: "The abundance of children in Kontula was almost frightening. Children flew

[68] HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 41.

[69] HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 39.

[70] Jokinen, E. (1996). *Väsynyt äiti*. Gaudeamus, 183.

[71] Kortteinen, M. (1982). *Lähiö: tutkimus elämäntapojen muutoksesta*. Helsinki, 79–80.

[72] Saarikangas (2014a), 51–55.

[73] An author who moved from nearby Herttoniemi to Vuosaari as a young mother in 1965. HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 98.

Photo 10.7 A generously furnished yard in Kivenlahti, Espoo. The housing surrounds the yards in a semi-closed re-interpreted grid layout, rebuilt and original nature exist side by side, and the intimate space of home and social life in the yards are closely connected (Photograph: Teuvo Kanerva 1975–1980, KAMU Espoo City Museum)

everywhere, everyone had just moved and the place in the circle of friends had to be fought for. My little brother did not dare to go out at all."[74]

Yard equipment was elementary in marking open spaces as yards. Swings, sandboxes, and climbing frames together with laundry lines, carpet-beating racks, and perhaps benches were their typical equipment. Inhabitants sometimes furnished the somewhat ascetic yards with play and sports equipment, and in the winter froze ice rinks on the yards. Inhabitants perceived the open spaces between the buildings as yards with overlapping zones of entrances, parking lots, and maintenance and play areas. The

[74] An author who moved from the city center to Kontula at the age of seven in 1966. HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 75.

children viewed them all as playgrounds. The negotiated and experiential boundaries of yards did not follow the official plot boundaries:

> Territories were firm from the beginning. Who cared about strict plot boundaries? Our building included fine rocky hills and boulders and were out of bounds to the children of the neighboring building. Using others' swings or cutting across the plot was done at your own risk.[75]

The physical metamorphosis of the yard was perhaps the clearest indication of how suburban planning and living restructured urban space. In the perimeter blocks of the city center, streets and buildings surrounded the courtyards, whereas in the forest suburbs yards surrounded buildings. Even if in the compact cities buildings again surrounded yards, big yards were only semi-closed and spatially and experientially closer to the yards of open forest suburbs than those of the city center.

Unplanned and Planned Outdoors

> The summer suburb was printed on my memory in some scenes, atmospheres, and scents. Heat and dust! Dirty, sweating boys playing football. The urban scent of wet asphalt after the rain, when we got back from the countryside. Cellars, doorways, flat roofs, staircases, parking lots, concrete. But also parks, lawns and thick forest, which was not yet turned into park, and which we at the age of seven called rainforest. Incomplete buildings and a fascinating amount of building materials occupy a central place in my childhood imagery. […] The smell of timber and cement were telling about thrilling abundance. There was always something new to discover.[76]

For children, playing almost always took place outside and did not stay within the assigned boundaries of yards or official playgrounds. Children did not perceive their environment as an abstract, but through doing it, by climbing, crawling, running, listening, smelling, and tasting.[77] They took the ambiguous spaces between the buildings, the cliffs, forests, and wastelands in the fringes of habitation as fascinating hideouts and adventure spots. If the open yards formed a kind of panopticon, the woods and

[75] HKA, LS 1995, Espoo 7.

[76] HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki, 79. An author who moved to Kontula in the mid-1960s at the age of six.

[77] Halldén (2009), 155–156.

wastelands provided a shelter away from the watchful eye of the adults. What the forest meant to the children could be a small strip near the home with trees, shrubs, and hiding places. It was not overly maintained, allowing branches to be cut and huts to be built. The spatial and experiential characteristic of both forest suburbs and compact cities made it possible to move in large areas without crossing busy streets, which together with cultural conventions encouraged children to move around on their own (Photo 10.8).[78]

Living close to nature was the *leitmotiv* of post-war suburban planning. Suburban protagonists continued the early twentieth-century views of nature as a place for a good childhood.[79] However, the planning of the suburban environment was less regulated than that of the dwellings, despite the new emphasis on planned recreation facilities for all as part of the new welfare ideal.[80] The pattern of suburban outdoors—yards, green areas, play, and sports grounds—echoed the visions of suburban protagonists, but the degree of their design varied.[81]

To the disappointment of suburban visionaries, the first detailed national norms on the suburban outdoors concerned the amount of parking spaces (1959) instead of children's play areas.[82] It was not until 1973 that the Ministry of the Interior published national standards for the size, amount, equipment, and proximity to dwellings of three types of safe and healthy play spaces in yards, suburban blocks, and neighborhoods.[83] The Day Care Act (1973) recommended also the reinforcing of the activities of existing municipal and supervised playgrounds to complement day care services. Official play spaces were adult-designed with attention paid to children's scale and their supposed needs and fitted with basic equipment. In the 1970s, the increased planning regulations and the concomitant breakthrough of the play equipment industry began to increase the range

[78] Moll V. and Kuusi, H. (2021). From city streets to suburban woodlands: The urban planning debate on children's needs, and childhood reminiscences, of 1940s–1970s Helsinki. *Urban History* 48(1), 137.

[79] Sandell, K. and Sörlin, S. (2008). Naturen som ungdomsfostrare. In S. Sörlin (ed.), *Friluftshistoria*. Carlsson Bokförlag, 27–46.

[80] Meurman (1947), 361.

[81] Hautamäki and Donner (2019), 16–18; Hautamäki and Donner (2022), 264–265.

[82] *Rakennusasetus* 266/1959, §56; Meurman, O-I. (1960). Asemakaavallinen tilanteemme. *Arkkitehti* 4–5/1960, 81–82.

[83] *Asetus rakennusasetuksen muuttamisesta* 791/1973; *Leikkialueiden suunnittelu* (1974). Sisäasiainministeriö. Kaavoitus- ja rakennusosasto.

Photo 10.8 The grid pattern of Olari compact city (1968–1973) was adapted to the steep slope in a textbook-like manner. The hierarchic traffic separation supported the children's wide radius of motion (Photograph: Volker von Bonin 1980, Finnish Heritage Agency)

of playground equipment.[84] Suburban playgrounds were simultaneously both lived and planned environments and social services with supervised and unsupervised activities. In the suburban landscapes, generously equipped playgrounds became both more visible and more demarcated. Systematic construction and the regulation of playgrounds with increased indoor spaces contributed to the institutionalization of childhood.

[84] Moll, V. and Jouhki, E. (2021). Leikin paikka: Rakennettujen leikkiympäristöjen kehitys 1970-luvun Helsingissä. *Yhdyskuntasuunnittelu* 59(1), 16–20.

Together with kindergartens and schools, they acted as intermediate domains between homes and society.

Residents of different ages used and gave different meanings to the same suburban environment, but all age groups highlighted the significance of natural surroundings. Those who relocated to the suburbs as teenagers wrote the most negative recollections. One author born in Vuosaari in 1966 summarized the experiences of many: "Life in the suburbs became miserable during adolescence. There was not much organized activity for the youth."[85] For teenagers, forests and wastelands were often the only places of their own to socialize with each other. They felt that apart from sports grounds, the designers had forgotten them and journalists treated them as a nuisance. Designers regarded children and youth as a unified group, paying most attention to children. School took up the teenagers' time. Outside schools, hobbies relied on parent-volunteering and the rare indoor facilities of parishes to engage in independent and guided hobbies. The first municipal youth houses opened in Haukilahti in 1966. Consequently, teenagers took over the cellars, shopping centers, kiosks, few cinemas, and cafes. The conceptualization and experiences of youth as a separate age changed significantly during the 1950s and 1960s, when suburban children became teenagers. Hanging out in the city center attracted teenagers, for whom the world opened up outside the suburbs.[86]

Despite the overflowing focus on nature by architects, town planners, garden designers, and landscape architects, large areas in yards, between buildings, and in the fringes of habitation were left as they were as untamed wildscapes. Yet undefined natural surroundings and naturecultures beyond the domain of active management repeatedly emerge in the memoirs.

Nature was omnipresent in the lived suburban environments, from the views from windows and small details to scents, sounds, and the overall setting. The interplay between buildings, the trimmed lawns, hedges, rose bushes, and untreated forestry-rich nature brought aesthetic diversity to the environment and divided it experientially into parallel and overlapping zones.[87] Large buildings often stood in contrast to large plots of undefined land. Hence, green as much as white was the prominent and experiential color of modern suburban life. Designers staged the entire neighborhood

[85] HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 87. An author born in Vuosaari in 1966.

[86] Pulma (2000), 249–269.

[87] Kummala, P. (2016). Tämä ei ole luontoa! *Helsingin yliopisto*, 153–158.

of forest suburbs as an open forest park for recreation, but also in the compact cities nature flowed between buildings and ruled in the fringes of habitation.

Contributors perceived forests and wastelands as the reverse of architecture. As undefined areas beyond the designers' reach, they broke down the architectural uniformity and provided ambiguous spaces to make one's own.[88] An author who grew up in Pihlajamäki in the 1960s contrasted the ascetic modern architecture with the surrounding forest:

> This forest, which is now the Pihlajisto suburb, is one of the most important places in my childhood memories. It had endlessly exciting places where we could play. For us urban children, the forest meant a connection with nature, in contrast to the desert of asphalt and concrete on the other side of the building.[89]

Suburbanites felt at home in the midst of the woods (Photo 10.9). Having nature close by meant having space for secrets, soothing, and socializing. Nature had a different order and pace than the industrially built environment. As new buildings stood still and patinated slowly, nature brought temporality and layers to the new, comprehensively planned, and industrial environment. Old vegetation connected inhabitants with the past of the areas and changed according to the weather and seasons. Nature made it easier to settle into the new neighborhood. Those moving from the center of Helsinki perceived the nature-rich suburbs as a contrast with a city "almost devoid of all original nature,"[90] whereas those relocating from the countryside emphasized the similarity between the suburban and rural milieus: "The relocation to Helsinki would hardly have been permanent for me if my apartment had not been so close to nature."[91] Moreover, nature compensated for the lack of services and the unfinishedness of the environment. One author who moved from the city center to Kontula in 1966 begins her memoirs with the wonders of the new home, soon moving on to the environment:

[88] Newman, A. (2015). *Landscape of discontent: Urban sustainability in immigrant Paris.* University of Minnesota Press, 78–83.

[89] HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 44.

[90] An author who relocated as a student from the city center to Matinkylä in 1971. HKA, LS 1995, Espoo 31.

[91] An author who moved as a young father from eastern Finland to Kontula in 1965. SKS, KRA. Kontula 2000, 56.

Photo 10.9 Rowing boys in Vuosaari, August 1965. Inhabitants bent the entire hybrid suburban setting for their various activities and recreation (Photograph: Yrjö Lintunen, People's Archives)

> There was still chaos in the yard because other buildings were still under construction. The nearest shop was in Myllypuro (the neighboring suburb). But what about those! We had a FOREST. Awesome cliffs from which you could go sledding or cross-country skiing. Forest sounds, nightingale, blackbird, songbird.[92]

The undefined natural surroundings created variety and possibilities for the agency of the inhabitants. Enacting with nature by evening walks, jogging, walking the dog, picking berries, sitting on the sun-heated rocks and

[92] HKA, LS 1995, Helsinki 80.

lawns, suburbanites took over their environment as common lands without owning it.[93] The amenity use of the environment, suburban access rights, leaves distinct traces in it, but intervenes more subtly than deliberate modification through design, construction, and cultivation. The suburban environments were therefore essentially lived and their meanings shaped by the encounters of inhabitants, the built and unbuilt, the homes and nature, and the constant moving back and forth between them.

Conclusion

Suburbs were at the core of welfare thinking in the 1960s and 1970s. Above all, they were people's homes: mental and emotive landscapes where the urban expansion and the formation of the welfare society were lived. Yet planners and inhabitants viewed suburban environments from different perspectives. Planners approached suburbs as the objects of design that could promote the wellbeing of inhabitants, emphasizing parallel and alternating nature, neighborliness, and vibrant urban life.

Suburbanites lived the suburban environments in daily practices and doing, atmospheres and perceptions. By bringing up the qualities they valued in their new environment, they wrote about wellbeing indirectly. The memoirs refer also to the less articulated dimensions of suburban wellbeing that emerged in the distracted perceptions and embodied enactments between suburbanites and the suburbs and were attached to the atmospheres of the multi-sensory suburban environments. Suburbanites widely shared the planners' views of the natural suburban surrounding as a best possible living place for families with children. For the majority of the first-generation suburbanites, the relocation meant that life was moving toward the better, and only a few shared the views of problem-oriented discourse of suburban nowheres.

The built and designed environment was just a strip of lived suburbanity, and its recalled good environment. The myriad combinations of modern architecture, more or less developed green areas, playgrounds, parking lots, forests, and wastelands in-between and on the fringes of habitation, old fields, farmsteads, abandoned houses, and empty plots became a distinctive feature of new suburbs. This kind of hybrid environment of artificial and natural shaped the mental landscapes of the suburban generation

[93] Asikainen, E. (2014). *Luontopolitiikka lähiöissä: Lähiöluonnon muotoutuminen Tampereen Hervannassa ja Vuoreksessa*. Tampereen yliopisto, 22–23, 43.

and created experiential and environmental diversity: a plethora of suburban localities.

Contributors from both forest suburbs and compact cities valued natural surroundings above all and beyond what the designers intended. The closeness to nature sought by planners and appreciated by the inhabitants connected different suburbs. The "planned unplanned" dimensions of suburban environments—the co-existence of the built and natural environment—became the most important feature of experienced suburban welfare. It might be that nature was what the environment at its best offered. Mediated and unmediated nature softened the unfinishedness of the new environment, bringing beauty and ruptures to the perceived architectural severity and uniformity. Moreover, undefined environments, such as forests and wastelands, were important wildscapes without a predefined purpose, enabling inhabitants to enjoy, use, and shape their surroundings as their own.

Despite the efforts to create completed environments and even if the suburbs were finally built relatively fast—in 10 to 15 years—the emergence of entire neighborhoods was slow. Similarly, attachment to a new environment took time. Suburbs did not just receive the inhabitants as completed environments and frozen containers of meanings with a one-way impact on residents. In due course, suburbanites became familiar with their new environment and knew how to move and behave in it, thus making sense of it. The point of view goes beyond the idea that inhabitants learn to live with what they had, making "the best of their situation." Instead of being passive users, inhabitants enacted their environments by embodied acts of habitation and continuously negotiated with and shaped them, hence turning them into meaningful home districts that allowed them to be their own kind.[94]

Those features that suburbanites depicted as the best and the most important for their wellbeing did not result solely or even primarily from suburban planning, but emerged in the interplay of the planned and unplanned. The lived suburbs are therefore not stagnant, but emerge and change over time, which means that they are open to the future and to various uses. The huge demands of place-bound social life and livelier suburbs than the city center erupted in disappointment and obsessive

[94] See also Junnilainen, L. (2019). *Lähiökylä: Tutkimus yhteisöllisyydestä ja eriarvoisuudesta*. Vastapaino, 89, 144.

critique. Moreover, the demands for a certain kind of social life shadowed the suburbs' own kind of social encounters.

The suburbs did not become disasters, but ordinary urban environments for numerous people. Since the suburbs were above all made by living there, the result was much more complex than that achieved by conscious planning. The suburbs must be seen in their own right as hybrid spaces where diverse planning visions, construction methods, and environments became entangled and lived. They became their own kinds of urban environments that questioned the polarization of the city and nature on which their planning was based, hence broadening the understandings and experiences of the urban.

Despite the suburbanites' positive memoirs, the perception of boring suburbs remains powerful. Arguably, those whose memories are positive have been most willing to tell their stories. Yet most contributors describe the suburbs as home. We conclude with the words of one author, who moved to Karakallio as a five-year-old child in 1968:

> Espoo became my hometown, not just one of its suburbs. I learned to love the multiplicity of Espoo, its different suburbs and the diversity of atmospheres and landscapes. Indeed, I think that people in their thirties who grew up in the suburbs feel the same way.[95]

[95] HKA, LS 1995, Espoo 5.

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