Critical geography of planning a home

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I study the home. The concept of home has been studied a lot in human geography since the humanist geographers, people like Tuan (1974) and Relph (1986) in the forefront, started in the early 1970s that place is more relevant in geography than space place has meanings, and later Buttimer (1984: 254-256) said that she had been "in the existential mood" at the time. The roots of humanist geography are in the post-War economic rise that made it possible to concentrate on ideas instead of survival, to talk about ideals and the quality of life instead of sufficiency of commodities (Buttimer 1984). The concept of place in humanist geography is to be understood as an answer to the positivistic concept of area that ruled in geography in the previous decade (Rose 1993: 41). Home was nominated as the most important place, a center of meanings and experiences, and the cradle of identities, a haven and a paradise.

People were living in their homes in the 1970s when these bold pioneers of geography put place and human experience of it to the center of research instead of space and area. Meanwhile, the planning system was planning and the building system was building *housing* according to modernist principles. Home was hardly ever mentioned in planning, and if it accidentally was, it was reduced to housing, or then it meant "family" (Thompson 1983; Healey 1997).

The still prevailing hierarchic institutions of the Finnish planning system were built in the late 1950s and 1960s (Mäntysalo & Rajaniemi 2003: 120), the era of no-show-home. The modernist planning regards space as abstract and functional three-dimensional surface, a tabula rasa. Likewise, human beings are objects whose existence can be reduced into a series of functions. Home, or any other place invested with meanings and feelings for that matter, surely has no space (not to mention place) in this kind of epistemology.

Urban growth and industrial revolution changed the urban spaces so that some form of systematic planning was regarded as a necessity also in Finland in the end of the 19th century. Before that, the urban planning had been operating on a "need to" basis, making rules for the use of urban spaces on pragmatic grounds, in order to prevent fires or for the occasional interests of commerce (Laakso & Loikkanen 2004). Citizen participation had been launched by socially aware citizen elite mainly as welfare projects to improve the quality of life of the poor in order to prevent social disturbances in growing and industrializing cities.

In the verge of the new century, the public government system realized that planning could be a form of citizen control. In Finland, the ideology of house owning emerged. Following loosely the idea of garden cities, nice little one- or two-family houses made of wood were designed, especially for the working class, in order to tie them into the land and to teach them responsibility. In an Act of 1927, these little houses were given the name that they have been called ever since: *omakotitalo*, literal translation of "own home house". A house became a home. In the post-War era of rebuilding the nation and its citizens, these little houses proliferated. The ideal family was defined as one that has at least four children. The happy family would live in an *omakotitalo*, the mother taking pride of the well-kept garden (Saarikangas 2004). The home and the house were deliberately confused for the purpose of control, a phenomenon not unfamiliar in other countries either. (Gurney 1999; Mallet 2004: 3; Blunt & Dowling 2006: 140–195). The people, the citizen, the inhabitants were not asked if they felt these places were homes. No doubt, most people did feel them homes, and they reproduced the ideology in their day-to-day life, in their uses of these places, in their thoughts and in their actions. These houses are still dream houses for many. The ideology is still reproduced in the day-to-day life.

The home is an experience of the everyday, which is bodily connected to a specific place and time and to specific social and cultural surroundings. Powers shape the experience of home as they shape any other experience. Kaika (2005) argues that the home, as we know it, was not born until in the era of the Enlightenment. The newborn modern person, mothered by the Enlightenment, the

Individual, needed a spatial expression. The home became the expression of individual freedom. The idea of a space that only belonged to the family spread from the bourgeoisie to the whole society (Juntto 1990; Saarikangas 2002). In Finland, more spacious housing was the acknowledged general objective of the public housing policy from the 1960s until the beginning of the 1990s (Hassi 1999: 43). Privacy is, then, culturally composed.

Widely used as an ideology, the home has been conspicuously missing from the actual hands-on planning work in Finland. Planning theories based on uncertainty and multiple values allow experience-based and affectual information to be used in planning. Citizen participation is a priority in the Land Use and Building Act that in 2000 was amended to comply with the principles of communicative planning. Nevertheless, the citizens and their knowledge are left in the shadows of the professionals and their knowledge, as several dissertations and other publications of the 2000s have discovered (e.g. Staffans 2004, Lehtovuori 2005, Puustinen 2006). It seems that, according to planning theories, there is room for the home in planning, but the modernist knowledge that still dominates planning, prohibits the use of a concept that is utterly subjective and corporal. On top of this, the traditional culture of planning is reluctant to open up to new ideas and to change its ideas of power from the centered to the networked notions that planning theorists (such as Booher & Innes 2002) claim to be necessary in order to have serious and effective nonprofessional participation. Employing the concept of home in planning would legitimize the emotional and the affectual knowledge in planning alongside the professional, technical and procedural. It would emphasize the co-operation of the participants – and, in the spirit of the darker side of the planning theories, it would emphasize multiple values and pluralistic planning, where the planner is not always right and there can be several ways and aims for a discussion.

All in all, the home is not only a paradise on Earth, a place of the Good. There is also the Bad and the Ugly. The feminist geographers criticized the idealistic concept of home of the humanist geographers. They were right, as we know. All that happens at home is not pure bliss

– violence, sickness and abuse live there too. Nevertheless, the home is, with its contradictory meanings, the center of the human experiences. (Blunt & Varley 2006: 3). Here, the feminists agreed with the humanists. But the feminists showed that power dwells at home, a fact the humanists had denied. It shapes the experience of place, the place itself, and the actions of the individuals. After some discussion, the notion of power, introduced in human geography to a considerable extend by the feminists, was applied to the notions of place, region and area (Allen et al. 1998: 65).

The power blindness of the modernist planning resembles the power blindness of the humanist geographers. The modern theories of planning, including the criticism of planning that is based on the Habermasian notions of power, remains blind to the ubiquitous presence of power. The ideal is that of consensus that is reached by free and equal information and discussion. The best result can be reached and everybody is happy. The Habermasian criticism is aimed towards the methods used in planning or the ways the discussion is directed. The planner is a well-informed person who is capable of neutralizing the sinister workings of power with his/her good intentions and clever attendance. Yet a darker side of modernism is present in the writings of other critical writers. Yiftachel (2002), Hillier (2003, 2008), Flvvberg and Richardson (2002) and many others see power in the Foucaultian way as a part of every human action, and the planner is affected by it just like anybody else is. She/he cannot claim to be an outsider in this sense. They claim that in the Habermas-influenced planning (and the "sunny" side of the criticism), the planner might even get to dominate the planning because she/he is unaware of her/himself being affected by power. The criticism of the dark side of planning theories is steered towards the planner as well as towards the other participants. It focuses also on the knowledge base of planning, criticizing heavily the modernist ideas of objectivity which lead to the dominance of professionals and their formally acquired information and knowledge, thus marginalizing other participants.

I have been studying two questions for the last five years: Are the apartments and houses really homes to their dwellers, and what does the home mean to them? I gathered 873

survey answers that I then analyzed by statistical methods, and found out that most people indeed feel that their house/apartment is their home, but it can be a home to a variable extent. The feeling of the home was measured with a 10 centimeter Visual Analog Scale (VAS) asking, "Do you feel your house/apartment is your home? Make a mark on the line that indicates how much of a home it feels to you." The two ends of the line were marked "not home at all" and "completely home". The mean of the "home points" was 8.2 (centimeters) and the median was 9.0. The people described the meaning of home as a good physical housing place where the day-to-day life runs smoothly; as a place for the family and other important social relationships; as a haven of peace, privacy and well-being, freedom and self-control (Ryhänen 2009).

In my study, the bad and the ugly were clearly missing from the attributes of the home. However, I am sure that there are people among the respondents that suffer from many kinds of disturbances and even personal catastrophes at home. Why is it not visible in the answers? Actually, it is. There were groups of people who had unusually low home points, notably the unemployed and the single parents and those who felt their income was not sufficient. They mentioned that better income or getting a job would make the dwelling feel more like home. Putting together the humanist geographers' ideas of home as a solely good place and the feminists' notions of home as a place where also bad things happen, as well as the answers to the questionnaire and the home points, my conclusion is that home is a continuum. It is fluid and it is in the move. Unwanted phenomena of life reduce the "homeliness" of the place called home, making it less a home. Therefore, the feeling of home when associated with a place (it not always is) is a spatial expression of wellbeing. I am also convinced, without the possibility to prove my point that the mean of the points is so high partly because the people who are not attached to their residential area are less likely to answer a survey about it – and they are likely to have below average home points, too.

It has not been difficult to talk about my research with people. I have been "collecting" background material everywhere, talking with friends over dinner, talking with strangers when travelling, listening

to music, watching TV. Everybody is the expert, and the concept of home challenges the professional information also in planning. It is an everyday phenomenon that everybody is bodily familiar with, and in planning it stands for the change of attitudes towards citizen information and the concept of space/place. A more inclusive idea of space/place is very much needed in planning where this main concept is poorly understood, claims Lehtovuori (2005), and he is not alone. The easiness of talking about home was evident when I called some residents of the studied areas on the phone in order to make interviews. When I presented myself as "a university researcher, and I study planning", I got no's for answers, with explanations that the person does not know planning at all. I carried on with the conversation, telling that I am interested in the home and its surroundings, in how things are going, what is good and what is not, et cetera. I got the interviews. Planning seemed to scare people off, whereas the home tempts them to discussions.

Jacobs and Smith (2008: 518) suggest that instead of two separate terms, the home and the house/apartment, we should start to talk about dwelling (which, by the way, does not have a good, inclusive Finnish translation). I disagree. I regard that the idea of home as a continuum and of it being more or less attached to a house/apartment gives more possibilities to talk about the emotional aspects of places in the context of housing. Only then we can pose the question of what we could do in order to turn the housing unit into a more home-like place. This makes it possible to discuss and use the concept of home, or experiences of places for that matter, in planning. The affectual can flourish by the side of the much needed professional "objective" information, opening a new kind of rationality in planning, an emotiospatial rationality (see Davidson & Milligan 2004: 523; Davidson et al. 2004) where the affectual is understood as an integral part of the everyday life.

Yes, I agree that the home cannot be planned, but discussing the concept can improve planning. The spatial is political. Space/place is deeply connected to the self-control of the individual in every situation of life. This makes home a political question (Varley 2008). Planning is politics. In my study, home stands for the multiple politics of the everyday life.

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