Putting citizen participation in place: Will mobile phones change the spatiality of participation in urban planning?

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Empirical research on participatory planning is somewhat stuck with ideas how participation – online or offline – is implemented and who are active in it. On the one hand, there are plenty of projects and studies on neighbourhood and community participation driven by care for particular location but not a single issue, and other the other projects and studies on thematic participation driven by a particular mission but not a location. Very few studies address a third category – self-selective participation on various topics, increasingly on digital platforms, even though it is likely to become the next mainstream.

The paper reports spatiality related results of a large-scale mobile participation trial on urban planning, ran in Turku, Finland, in 2015, making use of a smart phone application “Täsä” (here) developed within the project. Participants (780) used Täsä self-selectively mostly for input about urban environment, transportation, and recreational spots in the city. Importantly, participation focused on ‘common good’ issues, and discussed them as such, whereas the protectionist NIMBY-attitude was absent. The results show how people were motivated to participate in the urban areas they frequently use, instead of focussing only on where they live or only on the city centre. The results suggest that emphasizing user-participants instead of the traditionally addressed groups can diversify participation input and enlighten various grounded citizen perspectives.
Cruisers in the City: Staging the Mobility of Cruise Ship Passengers

Kaisa Paananen

International cruise ship passengers, who move in urban destinations usually have special time limitation that can make enabling and disabling elements of mobility meaningful for the quality of their visit. In order to improve the independent movement of passengers, identifying these elements is important. Based on a 'staging mobilities' framework that considers the dimensions of physical settings, material spaces, design as well as social interactions and embodied performances in situ, the location-specific information in the core tourist area of Helsinki has been analyzed. Go-along observations were conducted with the passengers and a mobile phone application was used as a recording tool. The data was then analyzed by combining GIS-methods and content analyses based on the ‘staging mobilities’ dimensions. Based on the results, four categories were identified under the dimension of physical settings, material spaces, and design: wayfinding, unexpected situations, lack of rest spots and walkability. Categories identified under the dimension of social interaction were: local people, service providers, travel companions, and other tourists. Categories identified under the dimension of embodied performances were: traffic behavior, occasioned activities, sense of direction, planning, time-related anxiety and fear of danger. These results can be applied in practice in urban destinations, in order to make the movement of independently moving cruise ship passengers as effortless as possible and therefore contributing to a better experience of the city space for both tourists and other city users.

Embarking on a Situationist dérive in nonrepresentational urban research

Noora Pyyry

Members of the avant-garde group Situationist International drifted in the city on their dérives in the 1950s and 60s to grasp its ‘psychogeography’. In this presentation, I revisit the Situationist practice of drifting as part of doing nonrepresentational urban research on spatial justice in the city. In contrast to aiming for any fixed representations of a city’s contours, I approach the dérive as a process of ‘becoming with’: a continuous re-invention of the city (and the self) through passing encounters. This understanding implies an emergent human subject, one that creates breaks in knowledge via dwelling with other subjects (human, technological, architectural, etc.). Here, thinking is approached as a joint-participation of the knowing human subject and the city: it is always spatial-embodied. I have named this style of non-linear reflection as ‘hanging-out-knowing’, since it draws inspiration from young people’s hanging out. While hanging out, young people subtly experiment with who is welcome in the city. To deepen the experimentation, and to direct attention to fleeting moments and banal details in the urban landscape, I have linked photography to my dérives. Concentration on doing photography can sometimes tease out situations, or encounters, that may provoke the generative moment of ‘enchantment’. This experience can usually be detected only when it is already gone, if at all, but it forces a new perspective to the world. In doing research, this view does not open from practice alone, rather it is often provoked by theory – after all, these two sides of the same coin are ultimately inseparable. To illustrate my argument, I introduce a sound-inspired photo-walk in Vilanova i la Geltrú, a vibrant small city in the province of Barcelona.
Political place as an assemblage of assemblages: a study on of spatial contexts in EU policy-making

Jarmo Kortelainen

The talk presents a recent study focusing on Brussels as a constitutive local context of policy design and making. The focus is on the European Quarter in Brussels as a political place and the context of EU policy-making. In addition, the EU institutions, the political place consists of a political agglomeration of various kinds of actors from EU bureaucrats and politicians to variety of stakeholders and lobbyists from all over EU which are permanently present in the Brusselian neighborhood. The political place is not treated as a passive context but a constitutive part of policy making. Firstly, the EU Quarter is presented as a fixed setting for policy-making with a relatively constant physical, locational and functional shape and a specific sense of place as the EU-bubble. Secondly, the emphasis is on the fragmentation and fluidity that portray the political place as divided into various political assemblages which make it an assemblage of assemblages consisting of smaller and constantly evolving sub-processes. Thirdly, the aim is to demonstrate the mobile and geographically distributed nature of EU policy-making and thus the dispersal of the political places where it takes place. This generates mobility of different kinds, which include not only the circulation of political ideas and people between different sites of the EU political system but also the monthly migration of the Parliament and related lobbyists to Strasbourg. I believe that these three aspects of political place help to understand the spatially dispersed and mobile nature of EU policy-making and to study the political places in other local contexts.

Pupils on the move: School catchment areas and the housing decisions of families in Helsinki

Venla Bernelius and Katja Vilkama

Throughout urban areas, residential segregation, school segregation and school choice have been demonstrated to form interrelated links, with possible effects to educational opportunities, educational outcomes and further residential segregation. However, the dynamics of these interdependencies as well as mediating factors also remain poorly known.

In this presentation, we explore how residential segregation is reflected on school segregation, and how these, in turn, are related to the housing choices of families with children in Helsinki. We track down the ways in which native Finnish families choose different types of neighbourhoods, in the proximity of different types of schools, by breaking down the within-city –migration patterns of families with different different-aged children. The aim is to tease out some of the possible effect of schools in the actual residential choices by assessing the patterns in the data according to the children’s age, also linking the choices to the socio-economic attributes of the school catchment areas.

One of our main findings is that the majority of moves are done before children reach school age. After reaching the age of seven, movement decreases noticeably. This can be interpreted as a strategic choice concerning the stability of the children’s educational paths. Another main finding is that the within-city migration decisions seem to vary according to the relative social advantage or disadvantage of the school catchment area. We have categorized the school catchment areas according to low adult educational level combined with low income vs. high educational level and high income.

The analysis is built on data on in- and out-migration from different school catchment areas, the socio-economic and ethnic makeup of the school catchment areas, as well as data on school choices. The data has been provided by the Statistics Finland, The City of Helsinki Urban Facts.