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Green Neighbourhood Identity: How Residents Use Urban Nature Against Territorial Stigmatization in Finnish Housing Estates

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ABSTRACT

The 1960s housing estates are widely defamed in public discourse, including two neighbourhoods of focus in this research in the fast-growing "sustainable city" of Tampere, Finland. Based on a qualitative case study, this paper analyses how residents have used urban nature to counter territorial stigmatization. It views the relationship between territorial stigmatization and neighbourhood identity through urban nature, which has received minimal academic attention despite the increasing interest in green and climate-friendly sustainable cities. This paper argues that 1) the symbolic defamation of forest estates is a social process that has shadowed the housing estates; and 2) the residents of the housing estates constructed a "green neighbourhood identity" as a counter-narrative to shed the negative discourse regarding themselves and their neighbourhood. Urban nature has been an important source for constructing a positive neighbourhood identity but has not negated the historically produced territorial stigma.

Introduction

> Sometimes, when I meet new people and they ask where I'm from, I feel like I should make a joke. I know that this isn't the hottest place in people's minds. I feel like I should say how happy I am living here before anyone can comment. My workplace is nearby, and all the necessary stores are nearby, and here is nature. Not many can say that they have a conservation area in their backyard.

This is how a 33-year-old woman described living in a symbolically defamed 1960s housing estate in Tampere, Finland. In public discourse, housing estates are criticized spatially and socially, but research demonstrates that outsiders' representations and residents' lived experiences reflect two completely different realities (Jensen and Christensen 2012; Junnilainen 2020; Rørtveit and Setten 2015). Paradoxically, cities are now investing in urban greening in gentrifying inner-city areas, yet many suburban housing estates already have substantial urban nature and still remain publicly devalued

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(Anguelovski et al. 2018; Mack 2021). This paper explains that the presence of urban nature in a neighbourhood does not mean that it is valued by outsiders, but that it can be deeply appreciated by the residents. I will introduce the term "green neighbourhood identity" to signal how residents use urban nature to construct a positive neighbourhood identity and counter territorial stigmatization.

In Finland, the construction of 1960s and 1970s housing estates was a massive state-sponsored effort that led one-fifth of the people in the nation's urbanising society – mostly from the working class – to relocate from rural areas and cramped city centres to the city's margins (Stjernberg 2019). Soon after construction, these neighbourhoods were publicly criticized for their low-quality construction and peripheral location. Over the years, these neighbourhoods even became symbolically denigrated due to the working-class population, poverty, ethnic minorities, and social problems (Junnilainen 2020; Roivainen 1999; Viitanen 2018). The 1960s and 1970s Finnish housing estate, or "lähiö", is a similar socially constructed symbolic category as the "Million Programme" in Sweden, "sink estate" in the United Kingdom, "banlieue" in France or "ghettos" in the United States and Denmark (Jensen, Prieur, and Skjott-Larsen 2021; Risager 2022; Slater 2021; Wacquant 2008).

Importantly, the construction of symbolic categories between neighbourhoods is relative (Jensen, Prieur, and Skjott-Larsen 2021; Musterd 2008). The Finnish welfare state and municipalities focus on the social and spatial distribution of resources. In an international comparison, social problems and deprivation in Finnish housing estates are exceptionally low, and the living conditions and public services are well-organized yet the public discussion on urban segregation remains high (see Musterd 2008). Outsiders as the media, urban authorities, scholars, and middle-class population groups defame working-class neighbourhoods to symbolically classify them and their residents, connecting to scholarship on territorial stigmatization (Schultz Larsen and Delica 2019; Slater 2021; Wacquant 2008).

To oppose territorial stigmatization, residents have strived to construct a positive neighbourhood identity as a counter-narrative, often by using the natural amenities in these areas (Robertson, Smyth, and McIntosh 2008; Rørtveit and Setten 2015). Moreover, urban authorities often organize de-stigmatization projects, occasionally with a place-making focus and sometimes with a community activation framework (Horgan 2018; Norris, Byrne, and Carnegie 2019; Schultz Larsen and Delica 2021). Despite the many de-stigmatization projects, residents' neighbourhood identity remains detached from outsiders' representations, with a tight territorial stigma (Robertson, McIntosh, and Smyth 2010; Jensen, Prieur, and Skjott-Larsen 2021; Schultz Larsen and Delica 2021). In research on territorial stigmatization, urban nature and residents' experiences of urban nature have not received much academic attention (Schultz Larsen and Delica 2019), although it is a distinct feature in Nordic housing estates and important for residents' neighbourhood identity (Asikainen 2014; Hautamäki and Donner 2019; Mack 2021).

During the recent COVID-19 pandemic, which included lockdowns and social distancing, the positive effects of urban nature became truly tangible as residents sought recreational and emotional retreat from nearby natural settings (Pipitone and Jović 2021; Venter et al. 2021). Even before the pandemic, the increased appreciation of urban nature has been associated with the sustainable city imaginary, which despite being an imaginary loaded with green and climate-friendly representations, has had substantial impacts on urban practices, for example, by causing green gentrification in

the inner-city neighbourhoods in Tampere (Leino, Wallin, and Laine 2022; see also Anguelovski et al. 2018; Angelo 2021). Contemporary sustainable city planning focuses on densification, low-carbon lifestyles and transportation, and urban greening. In this framework, the "physical representations of nature in the built environment" is considered a public good that is beneficial for people and businesses (Angelo 2021, 210). Although cities are making a "green turn" and investing substantial funds towards urban greening (Anguelovski et al. 2019, 1065), many stigmatized housing estates are already green (Hautamäki and Donner 2019; Mack 2021) but are not compelling for potential gentrifiers and investors (Anguelovski et al. 2018).

This paper contributes to discussions of territorial stigmatization and neighbourhood identity by examining their relationship through urban nature. By using a qualitative case study approach, I will focus on two typical housing estates in Tampere, Finland: Peltolammi and Multisilta. I explore how residents in the two neighbourhoods have used urban nature to counter territorial stigmatization. I will demonstrate that 1) the symbolic defamation of housing estates is a social process that has always shadowed the two neighbourhoods, and 2) the residents have constructed a green neighbourhood identity as a counter-narrative to the negative narratives to which they were subjected. I argue that for these residents, a green neighbourhood identity is not just rhetoric, but based on residents' rich experiences of urban nature having an important meaning for emotional well-being and personal identity. However, urban nature has not negated the historically produced territorial stigma.

Stigmatized Housing Estates, Neighbourhood Identity and Urban Nature

In the 1960s, industrialising Finland experienced a period of rapid urbanization that caused housing shortages, poor living conditions and homelessness. To improve housing conditions, the Finnish government sponsored the construction of large housing estates by offering subsidized bank loans to cities and construction companies to build housing; owner-occupied housing companies and rental units run by not-for-profit organizations and cities. High inflation made the subsidized bank loans very beneficial, but they included heavy regulation. For example, apartments were to be given to low-income people, individuals with acute housing needs and families with children, and elevators were forbidden in buildings with fewer than five stories (Juntto 1990). The regulation steered municipalities to construct housing estates on the outskirts of the cities where inexpensive and vacant land was largely available. By loosely following Ebenezer Howard's *Garden City* model, these late 1960s housing estates were sparsely built "into the forest" to adapt to a natural landscape, from which the term "forest estate" – or *metsälähiö* in Finnish – is derived (Hankonen 1994, 396; Hautamäki and Donner 2019). The goal was to offer a "cheap and good" solution to address housing crises and the problems with polluted, unhealthy industrial cities' living conditions (Angelo 2021; Hankonen 1994, 162). Moreover, Hankonen (1994) noted that Finland actually experienced urbanization through suburbanization, while Viitanen (2018, 591) observed that housing estates became "visual representations of Finnish welfare state: quite literally building a nation."

State-led suburbanization gave a spatially situated symbolic referent to the working-class (Hankonen 1994; Schultz Larsen 2014). Soon after construction, these neighbourhoods were publicly targeted for spatial critique based on their peripheral location, low-quality

construction and impractical arrangements for urban everyday life. In the 1990s, Finland experienced a heavy recession that primarily affected the working classes, and especially men working in industrial production and the construction sector (Stjernberg 2019). Consequently, mass unemployment and other social problems accumulated among residents living in housing estates. In the media, the spatial concentration of social problems increased their negative narratives. Thus, the landscape of the Finnish housing estate became a symbol of alienation, loneliness, violence, drugs and racial tensions (Viitanen 2018). Extensive amount of Finnish research has argued that negative public narratives are a form of symbolic violence that blames residents for structural social problems (Junnilainen 2020; Roivainen 1999). Further, Viitanen (2018) reported that when a film named after the Finnish housing estate, *Vuosaari*, was first screened for residents in Vuosaari, people walked out halfway through, as they felt that the film was another example of a negative narrative without any understanding of their lived everyday life in the neighbourhood.

This territorial stigmatization of working-class neighbourhoods illustrates the symbolic power struggles of how hierarchies between neighbourhoods and their residents are constructed (Evans and Lee 2020; Kallin 2017; Slater 2021; Wacquant 2008). In research, stigmatized housing estates are often given such debated terms as "middle-class flight", "segregation", and "neighbourhood effects", implying that these neighbourhoods have become spatial concentrations of poverty and delinquency (Kortteinen and Vaattovaara 2015; Musterd 2020). Slater (2021) criticizes their use by highlighting that poverty and social problems accumulate in certain neighbourhoods because of social structures that cause inequalities, and not geography. Thus, opportunities in life are determined not by a person's address, but by their position in the socioeconomic hierarchy that allows them to make life choices, for example, their choice of a place of residence. In Finland, a person's scarce financial resources often lead to living in more affordable yet symbolically defamed housing estates (Kortteinen and Vaattovaara 2015).

For residents, territorial stigmatization can be a marker that strips them from full social acceptance (Schultz Larsen and Delica 2021). Moreover, Wacquant (2008) described how an individual's address in the "ghetto" or "banlieue" can become a part of their personal identity, which then affects how they perceive their position in society, thus influencing social action (Schultz Larsen 2014; Slater 2021). Based on a Dutch example, Pinkster, Ferier and Hoekstra (2020) noted that residents are highly aware of the negative stereotypes associated with their neighbourhood, but territorial stigma "sticks" differently to different people depending on how their lives intersect with stigmatizing narratives. White, middle-class people living in newly constructed low-rise buildings can easily distance themselves from negative place narratives, while residents with a more precarious social status must invest considerable emotional labour in negating those narratives (Jensen and Christensen 2012). Therefore, the burden of reworking stigma is on vulnerable residents who try to portray themselves as "good residents" by blaming other marginalized residents for the negative narratives (Pinkster, Ferier, and Hoekstra 2020, 539). However, this only serves to reproduce the symbolic hierarchy of neighbourhoods.

The hierarchical categorization of neighbourhoods is based on how they are associated with social and class identities (Evans and Lee 2020; Savage, Bagnall, and Longhurst 2004). Features of a neighbourhood that connect with a combination of social identities and are shared by residents can be considered to form that certain neighbourhood's identity (Robertson, McIntosh, and Smyth 2010). More importantly, Robertson, McIntosh and

Smyth (2010) posited that neighbourhood identities have strong path dependency and are difficult to change (Cole 2013; Leaney 2020). Politicians, civil servants, reporters and researchers often consider housing estates as monotonic materializations of failed modernist planning and potentially disposable areas, but these representations rarely acknowledge residents' place attachment (Cole 2013; Rørtveit and Setten 2015). For residents, housing estates are landscapes of everyday life, filled with memories and emotions attached to the neighbourhood. Thus, neighbourhoods are places not only where people live, but also where they announce their identities (Savage, Bagnall, and Longhurst 2004). As Robertson, McIntosh, and Smyth (2010, 259) stated, "Having a sense of knowing where you are from can be a key part of understanding one's own identity and relationship with others." Similarly, Leaney (2020, 388) explained how individuals are "being placed" on the estate by the residents' active process of constructing a place-based identity relative to other places (Rosenlund Hansen and Weinreich Hansen 2022). Thus, the housing estates' residents inevitably construct the neighbourhood identity relative to outsiders' stigmatizing narratives by using their available resources.

In Nordic housing estates, the abundance of urban nature is a distinct feature, and important in residents' everyday lives (Asikainen 2014; Hautamäki and Donner 2019; Mack 2021; Rørtveit and Setten 2015). Based on research of Swedish Million Programme estates, Mack (2021, 560) introduced the "green affect" to signify green public spaces, and urban nature "as having a history, as deserving of respect and affection." She aimed to give merit to residents' experiences of urban nature, which often remains undervalued in the public discourse regarding housing estates (Mack 2021). Similarly, Zalar and Pries (2022) reported from another stigmatized Swedish housing estate that urban planners' intention to promote urban densification did not acknowledge residents' access to urban green space. Instead, the dominant sustainable city development has appropriated urban green areas with urban densification (Zalar and Pries 2022). For residents living in housing estates, urban nature and green landscapes can function as spaces attached to memories, feelings, and affects, thus contributing to place attachment, and offering individuals an emotional retreat (Asikainen 2014; Mack 2021). Thus, this paper demonstrates that for the residents of housing estates, urban nature is an important source for constructing a positive neighbourhood identity, a counter-narrative against outsiders' stigmatizing narratives.

Materials and Methods

The city of Tampere (pop. 250 000) is the fastest-growing city in Finland, and the Tampere region (pop. 409 000) is Finland's second-largest urban agglomeration. In recent years, Tampere has successfully promoted sustainable city development, including major investments in public transportation, brownfield regeneration, urban densification and urban greening. Sustainable city development is primarily focused in inner cities and areas where potential land value and real estate profit are possible by urban development (Anguelovski et al. 2019; Wallin 2021). Thus, housing estates have not experienced the same interest for urban development, unless major public investments are included, such as tramlines, commuter train connections or other projects.

The city of Tampere proposed two neighbourhoods, Peltolammi and Multisilta (Figure 1), to a national neighbourhood redevelopment programme coordinated by the
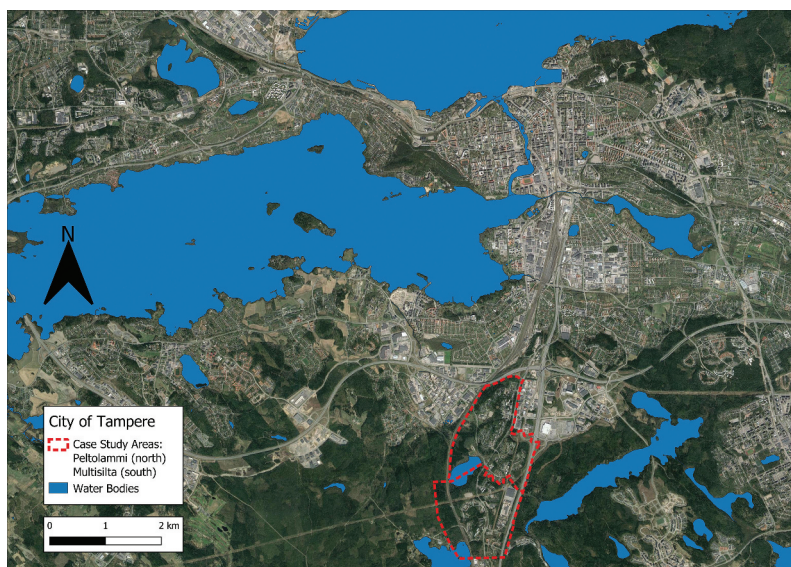
Figure 1. The core urban areas of the city of Tampere and two case study areas. On the map, Peltolammi is outlined in the north and Multisilta in the south. Map layer data is sourced from Google Maps, the Finnish Environment Institute and the City of Tampere. Map produced by the author.

Ministry of Environment. The two neighbourhoods were included in a programme in which the Finnish government subsidizes 35 per cent of investments in physical improvements. Proposing Peltolammi and Multisilta for the programme articulates that these neighbourhoods are potential sites for regeneration but need additional help in redevelopment. Major urban development was especially envisioned for Peltolammi, with a new tramline connection, public welfare centre with shopping, school, and urban densification to house over 1 500 new residents. The detailed redevelopment plans for Peltolammi were published in December 2022, while the redevelopment plans for Multisilta are not yet public. This research was conducted as part of a research project (Eco-social wellbeing and inclusion) funded by the Ministry of Environment within the same national neighbourhood redevelopment programme. The research project is a critical account of ecological and social inclusion in these housing estates, and we have independently decided on the research design and dissemination. The data collection was conducted before neighbourhood redevelopment began but it was discussed with the residents and interviewees.

The two neighbourhoods are located five to seven kilometres south of the city centre. Peltolammi (pop. 3 400) and Multisilta (pop. 2 400) are typical forest estates, sparsely built on the city's outskirts, with painted concrete elements of white and shades of green to blend in with the landscape (see Figures 1 and 2). The construction of Peltolammi began in 1966 and most buildings were owner-occupied housing companies. As the housing needs in Tampere persisted, construction extended further south, and the construction of Multisilta began in 1968, consisting primarily of rental units. The regulation associated with government-subsidized loans fixed the tenure of the buildings and affected the social composition of the neighbourhoods. Owner-occupied housing is generally the

Figure 2. Recently renovated 1960s high-rise apartment buildings and a strip mall in Peltolammi. Photo by the author, 5 August 2022.

preferred type of tenure in Finland and a way to build wealth through mortgage payments. Rental tenure is not a stigmatized type of tenure, but it is commonly associated with young people, uncertain long-term housing needs, and people who cannot afford to buy. Primarily working-class families moved to the two neighbourhoods, however, Multisilta residents had lower incomes.

In the following decades, the two neighbourhoods have experienced only modest physical changes, but some new apartment buildings have been recently constructed, and kindergartens and schools have been renovated. The city of Tampere has addressed these neighbourhoods as one area, Peltolammi-Multisilta, because they are spatially similar and part of the same redevelopment programme. The landscape consists of the 1960s and 1970s precast high-rise apartment buildings which in Finland are less valued in public discourse than older or newer high-rise buildings in the city centre. Although the two neighbourhoods have similarities, I have chosen to consider the neighbourhoods as distinct because of their historical and social differences, and because residents identify them as different neighbourhoods. In statistical comparison, Multisilta has a higher unemployment rate, lower average annual

Table 1. Statistical features of the city of Tampere, and Peltolammi and Multisilta neighbourhoods (Tampere 2019).

	Tampere	Peltolammi	Multisilta
Average annual income	€29 700	€26 100	€23 000
Unemployment rate	11.4%	12.8%	18.9%
Children (age 0–14)	13.5%	11.0%	15.3%
Pensioners	22.3%	26.2%	22.0%
Foreign first language	8.1%	8.6%	14.4%
Higher education (of over age 15)	37.8%	3.8%	18.8%
High-rise (people living in apartment buildings)	74.3%	8.6%	94.5%
Low-rise (row-house & single-family housing)	23.9%	17.1%	5.3%

income, and more residents with a foreign first language (Table 1). Overall, the two neighbour-hoods represent standard 1960s Nordic housing estates, and as case study examples, can be compared with other similar places (Flyvbjerg 2001).

This research benefits from the larger research project in which we have collected several types of data. To enrich the case study description, I will apply photographs acquired from regional museum archives, local newspaper articles, and publicly available statistics and documents published by the city of Tampere. This material is discussed with the core data in my analysis which consists of 32 thematic interviews conducted by researcher Kaisa Hynynen ($N = 20$) and myself ($N = 12$). The interviewees were contacted by distributing postcard invita-tions at local businesses, advertising in the local Peltolammi newspaper, and posting invita-tions on Peltolammi and Multisilta community Facebook pages. All interviews were remotely conducted via Teams or by telephone from April to June 2021. During this period, the COVID-19 pandemic was stable in Tampere, but social distancing was recommended.

Of the interviewees, 19 were female and 13 were male, and 22 lived in Peltolammi and 10 in Multisilta. The majority were of working age, mostly lower-level employees with administrative and clerical occupations and manual workers. Of the interviewees, eight were tenants, and 24 lived in owner-occupied apartments; 23 lived in high rises, and nine in low rises. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 1,5 hours and were all recorded and transcribed. The interviews included questions on four key themes: 1) personal background and housing history, 2) everyday life in the neighbourhood, 3) participation in neighbour-hood development, and 4) perceptions of sustainable development. Our interview ques-tions did not include direct questions about negative narratives, but interviewees wanted to respond to the symbolic defamation. We did not ask directly about the use of urban nature, but it was consistently highlighted by all residents, for example, when asked about meaningful places and everyday practices. Interviewees spoke openly and vividly to convey how they felt about the negative narratives, identified with their neighbourhood and used urban nature, and what it meant for them. Although the qualitative sample is not repre-sentative of the two neighbourhoods and on the share of marginal or ethnic population groups (two interviewees had a foreign first language) or residents living in high rises and low rises, the interviewees gave extensive explanations to questions about territorial stigmatization, neighbourhood identity and experiences of the local environment and urban nature. The discussed topics are widely acknowledged by all residents in both neighbourhoods and while the sample is limited, it is sufficient in the scope of this research.

The first analysis focused on categorising the interviews with central themes. Two main themes were central in the interviews: "representations" (sub-themes: stigma and identity) and "urban nature and local environment" (sub-themes: the neighbourhood and everyday experi-ences). The interview material was then analysed relative to the concepts of territorial stigmatization, neighbourhood identity, and urban nature. In the paper's empirical sections, the analysis specifically examines 1) how the symbolic defamation of forest estates has over-shadowed housing estates, and 2) how residents have countered the negative narratives through urban nature. In the last section of this paper, I will discuss how the two neighbour-hoods' residents have used urban nature to build a green neighbourhood identity to counter territorial stigmatization.

The Symbolic Defamation of Forest Estates

> Peltolampi and Multisilta have always been the lowest of the low and it won't change. You can see it from the people who lurk there. Poverty does not make anyone smart. (Kissanmaa [a reputed neighbourhood] 31.3.2021, comment section on the *Aamulehti* website)

This quote summarizes the negative narrative toward Peltolammi and Multisilta. In March 2021, the regional newspaper *Aamulehti* published a long story describing the city's new neighbourhood redevelopment project focusing on Peltolammi and Multisilta (Ala-Heikkilä 2021). Figures and interviews framed the story to describe the disadvantaged residents of these two neighbourhoods and the areas' lack of investment while emphasizing the importance of redevelopment. The message was that these poor and neglected neighbourhoods were in acute need of social and physical improvement. Residents were furious, as often when the media categorizes neighbourhoods based on their social characteristics. The director of the city's redevelopment project who was interviewed in the story, was then committed to correct on Facebook that the story's framing was the reporter's choice, and did not reflect the municipality's views in any way. The contradiction between outsiders' negative narratives and residents' lived experiences is a typical example of a symbolic struggle to produce class distinctions (Jensen and Christensen 2012; Slater 2021).

From the beginning, housing estates' subordinate position in the symbolic classification of neighbourhoods was formed socially and spatially. Social conditions associated with state-subsidized buildings attracted working-class families. Initially, public transit was deficient, as well as such social amenities as childcare and schools, and grocery and bank trucks compensated for the lack of services (Figure 3). Buildings were unfinished, roads were unpaved and lacked streetlights, and playgrounds and public parks were not established. For example, the new council housing in Multisilta had inferior-quality finishings, as one resident described: "Tiles crumbled off the bathroom walls, and I got new dishes from the Rental House Foundation when the shelves fell off. There was a lot to improve" (quoted in Reinikainen 1999, 68).

Figure 3. Grocery truck serving the residents of the young housing estate of Multisilta. Photo by Reijo Palmu 16 November 1971. Photo courtesy of the Tampere Museum archive.

In 1968, Peltolammi residents established a neighbourhood association to improve public amenities, organize community activities, and promote a positive image. Based on research of another Finnish housing estate, I noted that neighbourhood associations' efforts to raise awareness of the lack of services unintentionally yet publicly defamed their own neighbourhood (Wallin 2014). Forest estates became criticized for their impracticality in everyday life and inefficient land use. During the 1970s, the planning ideal of forest estates was replaced by a denser *compact city* ideal (Hautamäki and Donner 2019). Forest estates were an enormous improvement in Finnish living conditions, but concurrently, the rapid construction, lack of services, and affordable housing provided a geographical referent to the working classes. Our respondent, a retired teacher from Peltolammi described the following:

> These estates were built over a few years for people from all over the country. In the '60s and '70s, there were so many children that even the school had shifts. Therefore, it is clear that it was restless. I am not sure if it still reflects outsiders' attitudes; sometimes I think so. Housing prices are very low, which, of course, is good if you want to live in a place like this. I think this reputational damage and how long it takes to get rid of it are remarkable. Now, I think this is a quiet, comfortable, and laid-back village-like neighbourhood.

Interviewees' understanding coins with Robertson, McIntosh, and Smyth (2010), in that the neighbourhood's public image is path-dependent and difficult to change. Immediately after the housing estates began construction, outsiders began to draw symbolic distinctions to residents living in housing estates, and consequently, became known as "lower-class" (e.g. Mack 2021; Viitanen 2018). In another housing estate in Tampere, Asikainen (2014) reported that her interviewees had recently moved into the neighbourhood and had previously negative impressions of it, although these changed soon after moving in. Outsiders who defame people by their address might live in middle-class neighbourhoods and obtain "a higher-class status", but not necessarily. Symbolic struggles may be much more nuanced. For example, people often exhibit an attachment to their own neighbourhoods and draw a distinction from other neighbourhoods (Jensen, Prieur, and Skjott-Larsen 2021). This was apparent in both Peltolammi and Multisilta. Over 50 years ago, the housing policy spatially established the social differences between the two housing estates, with the housing tenure as another source of symbolic distinction (Table 1). A 60-year-old female resident of Multisilta described the following:

> The reputation of Multisilta is a bit worse than that of Peltolammi. Always has been. Here has been a drug problem, and when people's incomes have been compared in different parts of the city, Multisilta has always been one with the lowest average income. In Peltolammi, there is more owner-occupied housing, and here are quite a few rental units. I think that many people with problems in their lives have just been placed in Multisilta. When these people gather in the same estate, it changes the neighbourhood's reputation.

People struggling to find apartments elsewhere because of bad credit or other problems are seen as "placed" by the social workers in the not-for-profit rental units in Multisilta. When comparing the two neighbourhoods' social statistics, Multisilta is also further from the city average. This can be used to draw a symbolic distinction between the neighbourhoods and their residents. Residents in vulnerable positions must invest much more emotional labour to negate stigmatization, while white, middle-class, and owner-occupied residents more easily shrug off stigmatizing narratives (Pinkster, Ferier, and

Hoekstra 2020). To construct a neighbourhood's identity, available means are used to denigrate the other community, and the residents of Peltolammi and Multisilta can also denigrate others. However, as Wacquant (2008) has argued, it is not merely that negative symbolic meanings are attached to people through their address, but that negative representation affects residents' behaviour. A 37-year-old woman who had moved with her partner from Peltolammi to Multisilta explained:

> [Another guest at a housewarming party in Multisilta] somehow stated that "Oh, you upgraded yourself from Peltolammi to Multisilta". But I started to think, was it really an upgrade or a downgrade? I noticed that when someone asks me where I live, my answer is "near the border between Tampere and Lempäälä". I realized that this affected me in terms of how people think. What is it with this name and neighbourhood, because I do not see anything bad here? However, how *Aamulehti* [the regional newspaper] reports issues and all . . .

From an outsider's perspective, both neighbourhoods are similar working-class housing estates. Although Finnish forest estates differ socially in many ways, the spatial landscape with uniform building type, urban form, and peripheral location has generally become associated with negative connotations (Junnilainen 2020; Roivainen 1999; Viitanen 2018). While outsiders have been constructing negative narratives of working-class forest estates for over 50 years, these narratives do not reflect the lived experiences of the residents (Mack 2021; Rørtveit and Setten 2015). The degree how well residents can shrug off stigmatization is much dependent on the person's own social status, and in this sense, more people in Multisilta can be affected by stigmatization (Pinkster, Ferier, and Hoekstra 2020). In Finland, we cannot speak of postal-code discrimination described by Wacquant (2008), but the stigmatization of forest estates, a place of residence, is still very much an important part of the social production of class distinctions, which can affect residents' personal identities. Since the construction of forest estates, residents have fought against the symbolic denigration directed toward their neighbourhood, or specifically, at them.

The Green Neighbourhood Identity as a Counter-Narrative

While outsiders persistently defame housing estates for their social and spatial features, residents have worked hard to construct a positive neighbourhood identity from the available elements and their lived experiences. A 44-year-old father of three describes Peltolammi as:

> A working-class estate where nature is close and people have colourful life histories. A melting pot, which has its own strong image. This is how I see Peltolammi. An original working-class nature estate. Peltolammi and Multisilta are much better than their reputation.

Our interviewees' lived experiences of the neighbourhoods did not correspond with the negative narratives. The often-used paraphrase "better than its reputation" is commonly used in Finnish media, people's representations, and by our interviewees to highlight positive lived experiences in contrast to outsiders' negative narratives. Although the phrase may seem somewhat banal, it underlines residents' need to oppose symbolic defamation and protect neighbourhood identity, as a 40-year-old woman notes:

> I like to live here. This place is better than its reputation. I am always slightly annoyed when it is slandered in newspaper columns. We are close to all the essential commercial and public services. What is best is that nature is close. You do not have to go far, and you are in a deep forest by urban standards.

The common positive features our interviewees identified in their neighbourhoods were their friendly communities, ample transportation connections, all necessary services, tranquillity, and most importantly, nature. In both Peltolammi and Multisilta, our interviewees appreciated how nature was everywhere. The Peltolampi pond with its surrounding conservation area is located between the two neighbourhoods (Figure 1). In the summer, the pond is a popular swimming venue, holds a summer kiosk, and the city of Tampere and local associations organize activities there for children and youth. In the winter, it has cross-ski tracks and a tour skating course. These environmental amenities were used to construct neighbourhood identities in the interviews.

Mack (2021, 570) stresses how the "green affect" is important for residents. Similarly, our interviewees emphasized their attachment to the neighbourhood through urban nature. With immense pride, residents described the friendly, green neighbourhood as a place to announce their identities (Savage, Bagnall, and Longhurst 2004). The green neighbourhood identity has been historically constructed using positive features of the forest estates. Since 1969, the Peltolammi neighbourhood association has published its own biannual newspaper, which is distributed to every household in Peltolammi and Multisilta. The newspaper includes residents' writings, advertisements from local businesses, communication regarding local activities, and information about urban development issues. Throughout the years, urban nature has been a distinctive storyline in local representations. For example, the Peltolammi neighbourhood association's heraldic flag includes the beach and spruce trees (Figure 4). Neighbourhood association and their many activities is an extremely important form of collective resistance, a community's own de-stigmatization strategy, for producing a positive neighbourhood identity (Schultz Larsen and Delica 2021).

Urban nature is not simply a positive narrative, but also an important feature in residents' everyday life, and this has been especially the case during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdowns and social distancing have increasingly caused urbanites to work at home and spend more time in their neighbourhoods and nature (Pipitone and Jović 2021; Venter et al. 2021). The interviews for this research were conducted during the pandemic, which clearly impacted interviewees' responses. Many interviewees described how they organized their days: working from home, taking walks during lunchtime, continuing work, and going outdoors for recreation in the evening. Urban nature became a retreat, as one 37-year-old woman describes:

> The trail that goes around Peltolampi pond and the smaller paths and routes that go into the woods are the best in this area. When the coronavirus started, it was a strange and stressful thing for everyone, so here you could always get to nature and relax there. At least for me, it has been an important thing and a way to cope with this unusual everyday life.

When asked about meaningful places in the area, all interviewees started to describe urban nature: the Peltolampi pond, nearby lakes, beaches, community gardens, the Pärrinkoski brook, groves, large boulders, a meadow with sheep, and trails. This often led to detailed descriptions of how some meaningful connection with nature had occurred, as described by a retired teacher from Peltolammi:

Figure 4. A heraldic table flag of the Peltolammi neighbourhood association. Photo courtesy of the Tampere Museum archive.

Four deer came out from the woods past us: three continued their way, but one stayed to observe us. There we were looking at each other, me, my dog, and the deer. We continued our way toward the deer, but it did not leave. It just stayed looking at us. It was an amazing experience. I like those situations where you get close to something you do not normally get to see unless you hit them by a car.

A 55-year-old woman from Peltolammi described that "you can see animals and otherwise enjoy nature. Bird cherry trees are currently blooming, just along my way to work. I enjoy all these things". A young man living with his parents in Multisilta said, "In autumn mornings you can see a great mist. That's nice. And one spring I heard the ice starting to crack [at Peltolampi pond]". The interviewees described Peltolampi pond and the surrounding woods between the two neighbourhoods as the "lungs of the area", and walking there was a symbolic representation of living in the area. Interviewees consistently described urban nature as an important source of emotional well-being. In interviews, with a very affective tone, residents explained how urban nature is associated with personal life events, stories, and memories (Mack 2021; Rørtveit and Setten 2015). A 62-year-old woman reflected on her attachment to her neighbourhood: "I am at peace now. I am in harmony with my living environment. I think Peltolammi supports me, and I support Peltolammi. We have this synergy." She further clarified:

> I have been thinking a lot, and I realize the connection with nature and how we position ourselves in life. I lost my parents a few years ago, and I have walked a lot here with my grief, trying to find some framework of what this life is built on. [. . .] Especially during the pandemic, people have turned back to basics. And I think it is somehow a spiritually inspiring thing. In your own neighbourhood, you begin to appreciate a boulder in the yard. You will see that it has some enduring value, in those trees, or in the forest that is near you. So, here, you can find the building blocks of your soul.

The interviewee vividly described how her neighbourhood is filled with memories and feelings (Rørtveit and Setten 2015), and specifically, how everyday urban nature related to events in her life (Mack 2021). She observed the feeling of continuity found in nature, which correlates with previous findings of people using nature as a coping mechanism in times of crisis (Venter et al. 2021). The interviewees' ways of discussing urban nature conveys an understanding that the green neighbourhood identity is not just a counter-narrative, but a genuine, affective relationship to a person's own neighbourhood and personal identity. When residents commit to the neighbourhood and participate in the construction of its identity, it inevitably changes how they think of themselves and where they are from (Robertson, McIntosh, and Smyth 2010). This sense of identity does not transmit to outsiders. If it did, they would most likely devalue it to reproduce symbolic neighbourhood categories. Therefore, the green neighbourhood identity at stake here has little to do with the urban nature highlighted in the new sustainable city imaginary (Angelo 2021). The urban nature in housing estates does not draw in capital investments or the wealthy.

People's economic possibilities affect where and how a person can live (Slater 2021), but when a person commits to a place, he or she wants to participate in constructing the neighbourhood identity from within (Robertson, Smyth, and McIntosh 2008). Moreover, the commitment to view oneself through a neighbourhood identity is a personal choice that shapes one's personal identity (Savage, Bagnall, and Longhurst 2004). Our interviewees repeatedly described their emotional attachment to the neighbourhood as highlighted through narratives involving urban nature. For these residents, constructing a green neighbourhood identity is a positive way to associate their personal identity with the place, create a counter-narrative to negate outsiders' symbolic denigration, and shrug off territorial stigma.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has aimed to understand how residents use urban nature to counter territorial stigmatization in housing estates. The typical Finnish forest estates of Peltolammi and Multisilta cannot be depicted as dangerous, impoverished, or decaying, especially compared to their notorious international counterparts (Musterd 2008). However, territorial stigmatization works relationally; Finnish housing estates are categorized as lesser in the city's symbolic neighbourhood hierarchy (Evans and Lee 2020; Jensen, Prieur, and Skjott-Larsen 2021). Territorial stigmatization is a way to construct class distinctions in a particular social context, and even though social differences in the Finnish welfare state are moderate, they do exist. In public imaginary, these working-class housing estates are symbolically degraded by signifying social and spatial differences. Slater (2021, 162) notes that territorial stigma "is not a property of the neighbourhood, but rather a gaze trained on it." Although housing estates' residents might be less educated, earn less, and face unemployment more often, the features of the neighbourhood and its effects on the residents are not the cause. Instead, territorial stigmatization involves the symbolic structures that produce inequalities in the city, which in Slater's (2021, 162) terms makes "neighbourhoods *become the problem* rather than the expression of the problems addressed."

The 1960s forest estates' visual landscape, especially the uniform high-rise buildings, represents the "working-class" in outsiders' narratives (Junnilainen 2020; Pinkster, Ferier, and Hoekstra 2020; Roivainen 1999). Historically, the territorial stigma for Peltolammi and Multisilta was physically and symbolically constructed with the building structures and has subsequently and consistently reflected the symbolic hierarchy of the city's neighbourhoods. Researchers have well-acknowledged the rift between housing estates' public representation and residents' lived experiences (e.g. Jensen, Prieur, and Skjott-Larsen 2021). To oppose outsiders' negative narratives, residents must build a positive neighbourhood identity using available resources. The urban nature of Finnish forest estates is important to residents, but its meanings have not changed outsiders' representations. In this sense, I can agree with Robertson, McIntosh, and Smyth (2010), in that neighbourhood identities are path-dependent and difficult to change. These authors discovered that although later city development should change the neighbourhoods' relational class positioning, it ultimately did not. This was also the case with Peltolammi and Multisilta.

Peltolammi and Multisilta residents are aware of outsiders' negative narratives, but insist that their neighbourhood is "better than its reputation", most importantly by highlighting urban nature. Residents referred to urban nature as a significant resource for everyday recreation and a place for emotional retreat. Residents' "green affect" becomes personally meaningful by associating feelings and memories with urban nature (Mack 2021). By using, emotionally appreciating, and communicating urban nature to outsiders, people make the choice to associate themselves with a green neighbourhood identity. Thus, participating in constructing one's neighbourhood identity becomes part of a personal identity (Robertson 2013; Savage, Bagnall, and Longhurst 2004).

Although outsiders' negative narratives might have a minor impact on residents' everyday spatial practices, they can also negatively affect residents' personal identity, especially when residents have associated their identity with the

neighbourhood. Our interviewees consistently emphasized the positive features of urban nature, but this seemed insignificant in changing negative narratives. However, for Peltolammi and Multisilta residents, urban nature enabled them to construct a green neighbourhood identity, a way of shrugging off outsiders' negative narratives and articulating a positive explanation of where they are from and why they identify with the neighbourhood (Pinkster, Ferier, and Hoekstra 2020; Robertson 2013).

In growing Nordic cities, housing estates have increasingly become potential sites for urban densification (e.g. Zalar and Pries 2022). Until these days, Peltolammi and Multisilta have not gained attention from urban development, but fast city growth has changed this, and they have now been designated as redevelopment sites. Some interviewees were highly sceptical about urban densification, while others hoped that it would revitalize the neighbourhood. Given the interviewees' emotional tone regarding urban nature, urban densification is clearly a difficult topic, and very relevant in several other Nordic housing estates currently being redeveloped. Although urban greening and densification have become common-sense policies for sustainable city development (Angelo 2021), spacious, green housing estates have not been valued, but instead criticized as non-urban. Zalar and Pries (2022) reported that in Malmö, Sweden, planners paradoxically wanted to "fix" housing estates by implementing densification in green areas. Similarly, Mack (2021) noted that the preservation of green areas is often disregarded in favour of densification. Peltolammi and Multisilta are not under an acute threat of losing their forests and becoming over-densified, but a general tension still exists regarding sustainable city development: it simultaneously aims for greening and densification, which are not balanced between neighbourhoods.

Forest estates are neighbourhoods with histories, places that residents associate with feelings and memories, and areas where people wish to declare their identities. Urban nature has been an important source for constructing a positive green neighbourhood identity and a significant source for emotional well-being, but has not negated the historically produced territorial stigma. As housing estates in Finland and other countries face increasing pressure towards densification, urban planners should be attentive to the original planning ideal and community-constructed green neighbourhood identity. If new development does not connect to neighbourhood identity, it can create distinctions between the new and the old neighbourhood and does not cure the reputational damage. By carefully listening to residents, urban planners can identify how urban nature is meaningful for residents, protect it, and use it as a strength in redeveloping the neighbourhood from the residents' standpoint. Redevelopment is not a black-and-white choice between neighbourhood preservation and transformation, but it should respect nature and residents' experiences.

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