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From big apple to home of hockey: how scalar narratives and performative practices work in urban planning

Helena Leino 

Environmental Policy, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

ABSTRACT

Drawing from a case study in Finland, the paper analyses the performative practice of urban development projects in order to win public support for the desired future. The role of famous architects as agents of urban change is pivotal. This raises the concern of how the performative trend in planning cuts down the public discussion of possible alternative futures. The analysis uses the concept *techniques of futuring* and follows the repetition of performative action. It is relevant to ask if the role of the public is to engage in the story presented instead of engaging in the planning process.

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Introduction

The Nokia Arena creates a new landmark for Tampere with an iconic, yet contextual, design that evokes the spirit of the Finnish people. (Architect Daniel Libeskind 13 December 2021)

Finland, among other Nordic countries, is known for the equal welfare ideal that has influenced housing policies and development since the 1960s. However, currently, it seems that growing cities in Finland have put aside the value of equal welfare and concentrated on the neoliberal ethos of economic profit-making via urban development (Mäntysalo *et al.*, 2015; Davoudi *et al.*, 2021). As the economic trajectory of cities has become increasingly prominent, the role of exceptional buildings and star architects providing iconic landmarks as agents of urban change has intensified (González, 2006; Ponzini, 2014; Alaily-Mattar *et al.*, 2022; Banks, 2022).

Besides being the agents of urban change, massive buildings and megaprojects need convincing narratives and stories that support the specific visions of the future (Throgmorton, 1996; Flyvbjerg *et al.*, 2003; Sandercock, 2004). The growing importance of storytelling and performativity has been recognized in urban regeneration before (Lovering, 2007), but as public forums and social media platforms have increased in diversity, performative planning (Yu 2020) and the sequential logic that supports the narratives of the future have gained more interest only recently (Hajer & Pelzer, 2018; Oomen *et al.*, 2022; Degen & Rose, 2022).

CONTACT Helena Leino  helena.leino@tuni.fi

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Oomen *et al.* (2022) have raised the need for careful analysis of the practices through which imaging futures gains legitimacy collectively. In these practices, the focus is on actors who actively bring the future into the present and use specific narratives, material artifacts, and settings in their performative action (Oomen *et al.*, 2022, 254.) When planning issues are discussed and opened in public, especially concerning strategic urban development and cities' imagined futures, they become openly politicized and can cause doubt, distrust, and resistance among citizens (Forester, 1982; Sandercock, 2004; Hajer & Pelzer, 2018). In public debates, the agents driving the change commonly use symbolic language, referring to issues such as memory, history, identity, affective belonging, and everyday life to attract the public (Pløger, 2010). To support the symbolic message, diverse visual representations have become important elements of crafting the story (Raento *et al.*, 2021).

Part of the global post-political governance culture is the practice of re-naming the objectives of planning and urban regeneration (Lovering, 2007; Tunström & Bradley, 2014). At the most obvious level, this is straightforward publicity, where property developers and public authorities devote considerable efforts to persuading the public to interpret the plans in a favorable manner (Lovering, 2007). The larger megaprojects in cities require not only private but also public funding. For this reason, they need skillful actors and narratives to support the desired building process for diverse audiences. The vision presented in public is the preferred future, an aesthetic illustration that is more effective if the audience is convinced by impressive performance (Kornberger, 2012, p. 93). Thus, studying planning practice as a performative action highlights the various skillful ways of interacting with the public. The author of the script chooses the relevant facts, needed numbers, and, as importantly, issues that are to be left out of the performance (Sandercock, 2004; Jokinen *et al.*, 2018). Actors speaking in public settings can intentionally simplify their narrative to make others see the world according to their desired frame (Lauermaann, 2016).

Leonie Sandercock (2004, p. 21) has recognized that the most common story in planning processes is the change itself and the desire to explain it. This is tied to valuing; something valuable needs to be remembered from the past, which then is connected as being part of the future vision. The audience need to identify and position themselves in the narrative, or at least find the hero and happy ending in it (Sandercock, 2004, p. 21). Scalar narratives are an important tool in performative practices. This means that agents of change tie the past, present, and future in a discursive strategy that mobilizes a particular scale to support the project and links it to wider accepted claims (González, 2006, p. 838). Both narrative and storytelling perspectives have been analyzed vividly within planning studies, and recently the performative planning aspect (Yu, 2020) has emerged as well. However, little is said in this literature about the dynamics of performative planning practices over a longer period of time. There is a lack of critical, profound analysis of performative practices that helps engender a more nuanced understanding of how the desired future is told, the combination of tools that steer public attention, and how narratives used in the planning process alternate between a particular place and global processes (Lovering, 2007; Buser, 2014; Raento *et al.*, 2021).

This paper aims to follow how performative practices and two distinct scalar narratives which constructed desired futures that became collectively held. The interest is in the combination of sequences of performative practices where pivotal actors brought the

future into the present and used specific scalar narratives. Consequently, the majority of the opposing public opinion changed to supporting the project. The focus of the analysis is on the beginning of the planning process in 2010, but the latter part of the analysis returns to re-examine the change of the scalar narrative at the time the project was completed in 2021–2022. The return to the case reveals the emergent and unexpected elements that longer construction processes involve and calls attention to the power dynamics of the situation.

Performative practices and scalar narratives working for the future

The concept of performativity has been widely used in the social sciences since the 1960s. There are manifold analyses of micro-level social action, including social norms, rituals, and everyday drama, as well as the performativity of identity (Austin, 1962; Butler, 1990). Thus, the rituality of different kinds of situations and the power positions of actors leading diverse ceremonials in our society have been widely acknowledged (Foucault, 1982; Butler, 1993; Mol, 2002). In the context of urban land use planning, performativity is often enacted through the exercise of sovereign authority (Rose-Redwood & Glass, 2014). This means that institutionalized actors who have been recognized as legitimate authorities uphold the routinized protocols and have a legitimate right to authoritative speech within the planning procedure.

This rather conservative viewpoint on performativity becomes increasingly challenged when planning procedures are scrutinized from the situational perspective. For example, according to Futrell (1999), the performativity of a policy process is a situation in which impressions of committed governance are staged and maintained by officials. The material-discursive performance needs to be continuously reasserted and re-enacted. To analyze the repetition techniques and reassertion of authority in a planning process, one needs to focus on situated practices and micro-level processes (Futrell, 1999, p. 495). A degree of formality is conveyed by markers such as clothing, the spatial arrangements of the physical environment, and the degree to which the activities permitted during the occasion are codified in advance (Futrell, 1999, p. 503). At the same time, the rituals restrict the possibilities of public discussion developing (Foucault, 1982). These rituals play an important role in minimizing disruption; presentations in public hearings do not actually invite the audience into interaction (Leino & Laine, 2012).

Presenting forthcoming planning projects for the wider public rely heavily on future imagination (Hajer & Pelzer, 2018; Bonakdar & Audirac, 2021; Hoch, 2022). In the recent discussion, Oomen (Oomen *et al.*, 2022) and colleagues have explored how particular visions of the future achieve performative strength when bringing together actors around one or more imagined futures (Oomen *et al.*, 2022, p. 254). This approach, defined as the *techniques of futuring* (Hajer & Pelzer, 2018; Oomen *et al.*, 2022), involves diverse practices of identification, creation, and dissemination of an imagined future. Following these futuring practices helps in understanding how particular imaginaries are embedded in the lived and shared reality (Oomen *et al.*, 2022, p. 257). To analyze the formation of the imaginary, it is essential to follow sequential social performances and their stylized repetition where imagined futures are prescribed in a particular manner.

Some visions of the future become socially authoritative over others, and only a limited group of actors succeed in bringing the future into the present (Hajer & Pelzer, 2018; Hajer & Versteeg, 2019; Oomen *et al.*, 2022).

This case study focuses on analyzing how sequential performances reassert specific visions of the future in public discussion. In the case studied, two essential drivers support the tractions of a specific future: 1) performative authority of a pivotal actor within the planning procedure, and 2) scalar narratives presenting the future as a continuity from past and present. When performative practices are analyzed as sequential action, there is a need to follow the logic in the ways of representing, elaborating, and correcting the meanings. This logic makes it possible to understand how past narratives can be used in new localities and how the statements influence political decision-making in the process (Hajer, 2009, p. 66).

We have learned from Maarten Hajer (2009) that when analyzing performative practices, it is important to pay attention to pivotal actors' performative habitus. The actor's credibility and authority depend on the role they play in public, and through the discursive and dramaturgical work that actors perform, they either reconfirm an existing way of seeing the issue or break away from it and offer another perspective. Every public presentation, interview, or article published in a newspaper or on a social media platform shapes the performative habitus (Hajer, 2009, p. 71). This interpretation has similar viewpoints to Pierre Bourdieu's well-known definition of habitus. For Bourdieu (1990), habitus is a system of embodied dispositions, predispositions that organize the ways in which individuals observe the social world around them and react to it. Habitus is contextual and embedded in a given place or institution. Thus, habitus can be understood as dispositions that have been shaped over many years of symbolic labor, established over time through repetition (Hajer & Uitermark, 2008).

In the mediatized society, credibility and a person's symbolic capital are constantly produced and tested in newspapers, and on television and diverse social media platforms. People with a plausible performative habitus can use their rhetorical skills and sense of drama when participating in a political process and interacting with diverse publics. Consequently, this viewpoint leads the analysis on the techniques, styles of action, and material artifacts that actors use when they try to achieve political authority and credibility (Hajer, 2009).

Scalar narratives are stories that actors tell about the change in the suitable scalar localization or context (González, 2006). What is crucial for a scalar narrative is the connection to a causal explanation. The narrative explains, as a fact, that certain events are connected, and by following the desired future, it is possible to gain closure on the chain of events. What is striking is the scalar narrative's ability to translate, bridge and transcend, and simultaneously detach the meaning from its specific context (Padt & Arts, 2014, p. 12). Another important feature of the scalar narrative is the ability to present complex situations as relatively simple chains of events understandable by everyone (González, 2006, p. 840). In the case studied, the longer timescale allowed us to trace the change of the dominant narrative and how scalar references were used in different phases of the process.

Tampere Deck and Arena

The case studied is a large-scale sports arena and housing project in the city center of Tampere, a fast-growing old pulp and cotton industry town with approximately 260 000 inhabitants. The city has traditionally had strong municipal leaders and city mayors who have implemented large-scale planning projects despite critical public debate (Laine, 2007). There are several visible and nationally well-known landmarks in Tampere, such as the Näsinneula observation tower, the Tampere Hall Congress and Concert Center, and the buildings of the Finnish Broadcasting Company. The symbolic meanings of socially significant buildings have already been recognized in the city for decades. The case of the Tampere Deck and Arena, later known as the Nokia Arena (illustrates how the planning culture in Tampere based on strong individual leadership was updated for the demands of the mediatized society in 2010–2022.

The data for the case studies was gathered in two phases. The first data consists of media observation during 2009–2011 (including national television news, three newspapers and diverse social media platforms), participating, recording, and transcribing two public hearings in 2010. The follow-up data was gathered in February 2022, consisting of publications from two newspapers in 2021–2022. The key events from the planning and construction phases are visible in Figure 1, presenting the chronology of the Tampere Deck and Arena planning process.

The ways the future was presented through scalar narratives were analyzed from the newspaper data and the public hearings held in 2010. The analysis focused on how the past, present and future were intertwined in the story, the repetition of the

- February 2009 Tampereen keskusareena Oy to Finnish Trade Register (26.2)
- April 2010 NCC property development Oy, SRV oy and City of Tampere start the project (22.4)
- April 2010 City activates re-zoning of the detailed plan for the area
- May 2010 Public hearing at Tampere University
- May 2010 Tampere city government (10.5) and council (19.5) approve construction of the area
- June 2010 NCC announces Daniel Libeskind participating to the development project (23.6)
- November 2010 detailed plan draft and Libeskind's visions become public (4.11)
- November 2010 public hearing at Tampere University (9.11)
- April 2011 Detailed plan is approved in municipal zoning board (12.4)
- June 2011 Detailed plan is approved in city council (13.6)
- March 2012 Administrative court approves Tampere Deck and Central Arena plan, overruling the complaints
- December 2014 NCC pulls away from Tampere Deck (17.12)
- May 2017 SRV and investor partners LähiTapiola and OP and City of Tampere sign a pre-deal of the project. (11.5)
- June 2017 Supreme administrative court gives final decision in favor of the detailed plan (30.6.2017)
- January 2018 Construction work begins
- November 2021 Tampere deck and arena construction work ends

Figure 1. Chronology of the Tampere Central deck and arena planning process.

story on different stages, and the story's logic (how the desired closure was presented). To grasp the performative practice, specific attention was paid to the setting and discussions in public hearings in 2010. The physical situation where the discussions took place was scrutinized, as was the script: who were the key actors, what was appropriate behavior, and what was the sequential logic of these performances (Hajer, 2009, p. 67; Oomen *et al.*, 2022, p. 265). Material practices, such as costumes, questionnaires, or the content of PowerPoint presentations supporting the performativity, were also analyzed from the viewpoint of how they enhanced a specific interpretation of the imagined future and whether they encouraged opening up public discussion. The analysis is divided into three sections; the first elaborates on the routinized performative practices that repeated the main message on diverse public stages, the second illustrates the power of drama and key actors of the script, and the third returns to the case and illustrates the change of the scalar narrative ten years after the beginning of the process.

Routinized performative practice limiting alternative projections of the future from appearing

The idea of planning a multipurpose venue on top of the railway tracks in Tampere city center was first introduced in 2009. The empty space located in the heart of the city was, at that point, owned by the national railway company and the state. The Finnish Land Use and Building Act obligates municipalities to formulate a participatory agenda for each planning process. In this case, two public hearings, both arranged in 2010, took place at the University of Tampere, which is situated next to the planning area. Both events gathered approximately 75–90 participants, mostly middle-class, middle-aged and elderly inhabitants. The script of the public hearings followed the somewhat typical format used in Finnish planning processes: the planning architect from the city, along with other key actors, gave PowerPoint presentations in front of the audience, and some time was allotted for public discussion and questions at the end. The spatial arrangements, the clothing of the officials, and the practiced script indicated a routinized performance with a decent degree of formality and repetition commonly involved in public hearings.

In the first public hearing in May 2010, the area's future development was framed from the viewpoint of revitalizing the city center. This question was not only related to the Deck and Arena plan but also more widely addressed to the larger empty and gloomy space around the railway tracks. The speakers at the first event focused their message on developing the city center as a more urban, lively, and dynamic whole. A city councilor presented the objectives of the plan as part of the historical continuance of nationally well-known landmarks which the city had previously successfully constructed:

With the landmarks of our city, Pirkkahalli [Tampere Exhibition and Sports Center], Hakametsän halli [Tampere Ice Stadium], Näsinneula, and now hopefully, this arena and its wider plan, we are heading for good-quality constructions. We'll get a new landmark not only for the city of Tampere, but also a great attraction for the wider region of Tampere and Pirkanmaa. (City Councilor, 5 May 2010)

In their speech, the city councilor underlined the strong symbolic dimension of the project, which, according to them, would also bring economic capital to the city. The narrative was tied to the city's past with nationally well-known landmarks, but this was not appreciated by the audience. The previous mayors had acted as autocrats, and the public did not want to be part of this continuum. Strongly critical of the expensive project, a member of the public challenged the narrative:

Why on earth do we have to have this kind of disease? This swelling of the city, why is there a need to spread this disease? Why do we need to hoard more people, have big complex buildings and hush up the negative outcomes? How is this project serving the users of the current ice hockey arena who are used to paying a reasonable price for their visit? I don't believe this new arena is going to have the same price for ordinary users. (Citizen participant A, 5 May 2010)

In the quote above, the actors seeking economic benefits with the expensive project were seen as destroying ordinary citizens' chances to exercise their everyday routines. In the future, the poorest people could no longer play ice hockey as their hobby, which can be interpreted as offensive in a city identified with a strong industrial working-class history and the proud home base for two ice hockey teams. The public legitimacy of the planning process, that is, the authority consisting of the key actors from the city council and the building company, was openly questioned at the first public hearing.

The script for the future of the city center required radical rewriting, according to another citizen participant, who questioned the whole process and the methods used:

The inhabitants want to participate. It is really important that these issues are not resolved in the Supreme Court. This city should be developed in collaboration, not on the basis of the Supreme Court's decision. This should be planned in a way that the people living in this area can be proud of this city. (Citizen participant B, 5 May 2010)

The public was challenging the legitimacy of the process on two levels. The critics dealt with the participatory methods of the process and the few opportunities to influence the content of the plan.

Just before the first public hearing, a local architect and professor of arts took part in the debate in the national newspaper, *Aamulehti* (24 April 2010) with an article headlined: *The citizens of Tampere don't deserve anything average in such an important place*. The professor was longing for 'brave and dashing' architecture. In May, after the first public hearing, the editor-in-chief of the same newspaper concurred with these views:

When we are looking for a shape for the Arena, we should not be humble. We need to build racy and rough. [...] There are many possibilities to make mistakes during the planning and construction phase. The biggest mistake would be that the City of Tampere settled for some provincial building. Now it is time to show, puff out and dare. (AL 23 May 2010)

The visioned future started to develop as the sequences of performances directed the imagined future into a specific kind, leaving lesser space for alternative projections. The idea of a powerful symbolic landmark was first presented in a public hearing by a local politician and, within a few weeks, supported by the biggest newspaper in the city. The encouragement to 'think big' was understood, especially by the construction company NCC Property Development, which shaped the original script a month later by adding a new significant leading-role actor to the planning process.

The power of drama: a leading character enters the stage

In the midsummer of 2010, the construction company announced they had recruited the world-famous architect Daniel Libeskind to join the project. NCC and Libeskind had cooperated earlier in the Ørestad city center planning process in Denmark. The *Aamulehti* newspaper (24.6.2010) celebrated the collaboration with the headline: *Welcome, Daniel Libeskind!* The article introduced Libeskind as an original world-class architect capable of implementing creative megaprojects. The symbolic capital demanded in the previous public hearing was written into the role of the architect, who would make Tampere a globally interesting city.

The change in the dramaturgy was clear in the next public hearing in November 2010. Despite being absent, Libeskind was very apparent at the event. He could be seen in the staging, in the sketches positioned on the walls, in the video presentation, as well as in the speeches of the municipal officials and the construction company representatives. The leading role was completed as the main national evening news highlighted the architect's participation a week earlier. The diverse practices of performativity fostered situational authority (cf. Futrell, 1999). The presenters formed a unanimous team at the front of the lecture hall. In their facial expressions, speeches, and presence, the audience could feel that the officials shared knowledge that the public did not yet have. The hierarchy of participation and the demarcation of social distance (Futrell, 1999, p. 513) developed further as the men in suits chatted informally in front of the hall. However, any comments or questions directed to them were very formal and matter-of-fact-based.

In the event, the municipal official, as well as the representative of the construction company, had presentations with pretty much the same technical premises as in the first public hearing. The difference was in the way Libeskind and his sketches of the area were tied into the presentations. The Chair led the public hearing:

Now, I think we have come to the point that the next speaker is the reason why most of you have come here today. The representative of the construction company will now show you the true sketches of how this process will proceed: the sketches of Daniel Libeskind! (Chair of the public hearing, 9 November 2010)

The presentation was full of pictures, and the language in the pictures was English. Along came a high-speed flood of words:

I immediately apologize that I have only 15 minutes and this material [. . .]. However, a lot of this planning material has already been in the newspapers [. . .], so most of you must have an overview already. I am just a local engineer and have nothing to do with the architecture, let the pictures speak for themselves [. . .] You can see there on the walls the photorealistic pictures. [. . .] And here we have Daniel Libeskind's freehand sketch. (Representative of NCC, 9 November 2010)

The presentation was full of names of diverse partners (Optiplan, Ramboll, L2, Destia, VR, VSP Finland, Deloitte) and certificate systems (Green Building Partner, BREEAM), and the sketches included several English terms (grand stairs, urban development, physical barriers, deck accessibility), which the speaker had no time to introduce to the audience or translate into Finnish. The hurried tempo, the rough sketches, and the foreign language restricted the public from participating in the discussion. Following the NCC presentation, the stage was given to the city planning architect. He continued to

emphasize and demonstrate the 3D sketches and talked briefly about the participatory proceeding of the process.

As mentioned earlier, this participatory and evaluation plan has been on public display, and we have received 18 comments on it. We have answered all the questions we can answer at this point of the process and compiled them into a table that you will find as an appendix. (City planning architect, 9 November 2010)

The city architect mentioned that public opinions were taken into account, and the answers were to be found in the appendix. The public was not offered access to this or other documents during the hearing. The discourse was kept within the bounds of the shared knowledge between the city planning officials and the representatives of the construction company (cf. Futrell, 1999, p. 514). Even though the importance of public participation had grown substantially during the 2000s in Finland, two-way interaction was lacking at the event.

The information was delivered only in one direction, to the public. The city planning architect positioned Libeskind's role and sketches as follows:

We have considered this a lot because this architecture of Libeskind is very personal and novel. So, this situation is difficult for us: Should we control somebody's art with legislation and norms? And we have come to the conclusion that the sketches should stay as they are all through the process. [...] That would then be pure Libeskind. (City planning architect, 9 November 2010)

The narrative provided the city officials and construction companies an opportunity to justify their interests and present them with a very univocal and self-explanatory image of the future. The process transformed the architect into an artist and the building plans into a piece of art (Patterson, 2012, p. 3298). From the viewpoint of performativity and dramaturgical setting, the actors leading the public hearing created authority and credibility for the script with their united representations of the artist and the tight schedule. The consistent attempt to keep the public hearing on time and rushing the representations offered no easy space for public discussion, questions or comments. The guide was to 'be brief' with any questions, which again showed the planning officials' capacity to restrict and direct the public's comments, also expressing the authority of the organizing officials.

The material artifacts had a clear role as a supportive setting for the script. These included the sketches from Libeskind's office, which were hanging on the walls, the graphs and diagrams used, the PowerPoint and 3D presentations, as well as the microphones used. The sketches of the famous architect and all the related material were a marketing strategy, and the public was positioned as consumers of this visual imagery (Crilley, 1993, p. 237; Jones, 2011, p. 2527).

The event was contrary to traditional Finnish public hearings because the most central presentation had all the PowerPoint slides in English. This was not seen as a fundamental flaw, as the audience accepted the presentation of the planning sketch in a foreign language without complaints. The symbolic and global values were at the heart of the script, and the presentations brought these issues up several times. The planning politics, that is, the decisions and choices that needed to be done at the city council level, were not part of the agenda and thus not introduced at the event (cf. Flyvbjerg, 1998, p. 22).

The public hearing as a performance, along with leading actors, audience, and material artifacts, was brought to a close. This was achieved when the material had been presented, the time had run out, and a common opinion was created. Both events ended in the same manner: the chair announced that the hearing was about to end and asked the audience to participate in the voting.

I public hearing: *Let's make this exercise with hands. Those who want to proceed with the Tampere Deck and Arena, raise your hands now. Thank you, this event has given a clear answer. Thank you for all those present, and have a safe trip home.*

II public hearing: *Finally, we have the voting. First, raise your hand if you think yes, let's move forward. And then those who want to stop this project immediately [raise your hand]. Thank you. The result is not counted, but it gives a strong message. Thank you for the presentations; this meeting is now finished.*

Setting the stage, following the script, having strategies for managing interaction, and minimizing disruptions ensured that the voting ran smoothly. This was done through the combination of routinized practices of public hearings, discursive techniques, and asymmetrical relationships between the organizing officials and the public (Futrell, 1999, pp. 20–521).

Scalar narrative 2010: intertwining the architect and the city

From the viewpoint of performativity, the most notable change in the procedural script between the two public hearings happened in the line-up of the actors of the case. The indisputable leading actor in the second public hearing was the non-present architect, Daniel Libeskind. This pivotal position was emphasized not only in the second public hearing but also in several other settings. The scalar narrative of Libeskind's reputation was used as a functional tool by which it was easier to govern the public debate around the project. After the second public hearing, *Aamulehti* published an article entitled: *WTC Towers to Tampere?*

New York and Tampere. Two totally different cities in different leagues – as it comes to the image or the population. However, these cities have something in common. The common nominator is Daniel Libeskind. [...] Libeskind was haunted by his failure in the WTC planning competition, which would probably have made him the best-known architect globally. The unbelievable setback for this artist was so huge that he decided to push his WTC vision through elsewhere, as soon as the time and place were right. But who would have believed the great visionary would actualize his dream in Tampere? No one. [...] We should hail the Libeskind sketches. They show his appreciation for Tampere. (AL 19 November 2010)

The global story of Libeskind's previous career became a metaphor for Tampere's story. The scalar narrative leaned on history and built the desired future to correct the drawbacks of the past. The success of the city and the success of the architect were intertwined – both would live happily ever after as the Tampere Deck and Arena project was carried out. The newspaper attached the sketches from Tampere and New York side by side, and the shape of the buildings and the way the buildings were placed in the sketch

were alike. The performative habitus was further bolstered in the same newspaper a month later:

The architect, who has the status of a rock star, is sitting in his studio in the spacious meeting room and looking through the imposing row of windows [...] Architecture is Daniel Libeskind's way of telling stories. In his own life, there are at least as many turns as in his works. (AL 24 December 2010)

As McNeill (2009) and Hajer (2005) have argued, Libeskind is a professional when it comes to mastering the various forms of publicity and building a cult around an individual. Without Libeskind, the local developers could not have dismissed the strong opposition heavily criticizing the megaproject. With his involvement, the narrative of Tampere Deck and Arena jumped to a global scale. Libeskind experienced failure in the New York case but managed to use similar visions in the sketches in Tampere. This turn involved dramaturgical interaction and a scalar narrative, illustrating how a script with strong symbolic capital, together with the careful setting of the stage, created depoliticized planning performance. This change in the script ensured the symbolic power and the hegemonic understanding of the superiority of the plan in front of a diverse public.

The sketches made by Libeskind were powerful as they captured a strong visual image and told a story of a dynamic change for the city. The sketches influenced the political process continuously, presented for the first time in 2010 – and brought to different public stages repeatedly after that. Libeskind's sketches presented a solution to be proud of. This action can be interpreted as personality association, which is a long-standing tool in place branding (Ashworth, 2009). The technique is to associate a well-known individual in the hope that the necessarily unique qualities of the individual are transferred to the place by association. In Tampere, the image of the Arena became inseparable from the artist's creative work. Thus, the sketches enabled the planning officials and the construction company to create a consensus



Figure 2. Tampere Deck and Arena, December 2023. Photo taken by the author.



Figure 3. The deck from south, December 2023. Photo taken by the author.

on the planning goals, displace the discussion from public debate arenas, and consequently depoliticize the process (Metzger *et al.*, 2014).

Scalar narrative changes 2021: home of the hockey

After the plan received a decision from the supreme administrative court in June 2017, the Tampere Deck and Arena project was finally accomplished (Figures 2 and 3) in November 2021. The first internationally significant event took place in Spring 2022 when the Ice Hockey World Championships were played in the Arena. Before this, the opening of the Arena 2021 put the project and the area's wider development again to the public limelight.

The scalar narrative created eleven years earlier was not receiving similar attention as before. The most visible narrative used by the Tampere Deck and Arena promoters and the city officials no longer concentrated on the connection between Tampere and Libeskind. The opening festivities of the place, which was at the end named the Nokia Arena according to the main sponsoring company, were written about in the newspapers. The *Aamulehti* newspaper referenced Libeskind, but most attention was given to the history of Tampere. Tampere was seen as 'going back to its roots' in the narrative that received the largest media attention.

Nokia Arena enters deep into the DNA of our citizens. The Nokia company has long traditions in the city, and this is a great way to build a joint future, argued the city mayor. (Aamulehti 20 November 2021)

The new scalar narrative was starting to form, as a few days later, another local newspaper (23 November 2021) intertwined the history and future of the city:

Ice hockey has a logical growth story without space for magic tricks. Currently, we are in a situation where the audience wants not only hockey but also entertainment and

experiences. Ice hockey is a sport that also appeals to groups other than just men of a certain age. For this change, these arenas are a great solution. This is a wonderful challenge for the teams who need to be ready, Jalo continues.

The newspaper interviewed two local ice hockey legends, who both emphasized the importance of the arena project and the inevitable future development closely tied to the local history. The desire to explain the change itself took place as Sandercock (2004) has argued. The change was tied to valuing, and the audience was directed to remember and identify the dignified history of the city's ice hockey teams. This was connected to the future vision (Sandercock, 2004, p. 21). The other ice hockey legend reaffirmed the scalar narrative:

When we in the 1970s got to sit on Hakametsä hall's wooden benches for the first time, that was a wonder for a little boy. Now, this is a new emotional experience and a magnificent feeling,' says Mika Aro. 'This kind of arena is a brave decision, but inevitable. With the help of these new arenas, Finnish ice hockey stays at the European and international top level, Aro continues. (Tamperelainen 23 November 2021)

In the opening of the arena, the past-present-future narrative was attached to the industrial roots of the city and its strong ice hockey tradition. The scalar narrative was further reinforced the following spring with the Finnish team winning the Ice Hockey World Championships. The arena and the inhabitants had both undergone a series of changes and setbacks and finally arrived from the past to the present. The legacy for the sport and the legacy for the local community started to amalgamate and support the further development of the area (Davis, 2014).

Home of hockey – this theme has undeniable reasoning in Tampere. The foundation can be found both in hockey history and the present. Traditions are important, but the future is even more crucial. The successful world championships only underline the fact that the future of ice hockey is in Tampere. (Tamperelainen 16 April 2022)

The changing scalar narrative in Tampere verifies the viewpoint beautifully emphasized by Throgmorton (1996): people compose and justify stories using specific cultural and institutional norms and practices. Tampere had become the 'Home of hockey,' and the arena was part of this continuum. The first official ice hockey game was played in Tampere in 1928, the first Finnish ice hockey arena was constructed in Tampere in 1965, and finally, according to the city's official tourist information pages, 'hockey came back home' in 2022 with the help of the new arena (Kiekonkoti 2022). Interestingly, the public made this identification as early as at the first public hearing in 2010, but the city officials did not understand the value of connecting the urban infill project with the ice hockey history of the city at that point.

Discussion

Analyzing planning processes from the performativity viewpoint enables us to scrutinize what kind of action and narratives hold up in diverse settings and temporalities. As the analysis was conducted in two phases, in 2011 and 2022, it was possible to reflect on the techniques of futuring over a longer period. The timescale helped in

asking how a performative governance strategy works in settings where sequences of action follow each other in a fast-paced manner and, on the other hand, in spotting the significant changes that were made over the years. When the public and local context called for change, there was the possibility of redefining the dominant narrative. This transition can be seen as part of the futuring tactics and an attempt to convince the public with a narrative better fitting the changing situation in a specific context.

The city municipalities' and construction companies' desired future vision can be interpreted as a political-economic megaproject reinforcing large-scale urban regeneration. The performative practices guide people's perception through a carefully orchestrated process to arrive at the same conclusion (cf. González, 2006; Kornberger & Clegg, 2011). Following how the script of the desired future is performed enables us to see how different stages are related to each other and how scalar narratives work when they translate and bridge different contexts. In the Finnish case, two significant changes in the techniques of presenting the future were made along the process: 1) bringing a famous and attractive character to lead the performative process, and 2) changing the prevailing narrative to another one when the situation called for it and alluring the public with the new narrative. When these moves were made, repetition at different stages supported the chosen action.

Analyzing the case shows how actors like Libeskind are functional strategic allies in performative planning. This tool has been used many times before to raise money or push a project through the local decision-making procedure (Patterson, 2012; Ponzini 2014; Alaily-Mattar *et al.*, 2022). Hiring celebrity architects is useful when the objective is to win the support of major stakeholder groups. As Lovering (2007) has argued, the culture of neoliberal governance has encouraged cities globally to create spectacles around urban icons and iconic architecture that directs the public gaze. This dynamic is a strong discursive instrument that should be noted when analyzing urban planning politics and especially the role of celebrity architects (Patterson, 2012, p. 3302).

The role and story of Libeskind was spoken about in various events along the planning process, lasting over ten years. When the project was ready, the narrative leaning on Libeskind came due. The change in the scalar narrative is interesting, as in the first public hearing in 2010, the arguments from the audience emphasized the importance of the ice hockey history of the city, whereas the city officials' arguments did not find resonance with the public. Instead, the visioned future presented by the officials appeared alien and unconvincing. It took over ten years and success in the world championships for the city and private investors to fully understand the value of ice hockey as a meaningful and important narrative that has the power to carry the area's urban development further.

Conclusions

The ideals of public participation, transparency, and public discussions as part of the legitimacy of the process have hindered the planning proceedings remarkably in Finland in the 2000s. Simultaneously the global neoliberal ideology has taken root in Finnish planning and governance culture, increasing the expectations of urban planning to perform as an active inducer of growth, competitiveness, and public-private partnerships (Mäntysalo *et al.*, 2015). The promoters of the urban development project urge

proceeding in a more straightforward manner and rambling discussion on alternative futures is not warmly welcomed. However, as professionals make plans for the distant future, the outcomes they describe may lack relevance and force for people rooted in the present (Hoch, 2022).

Even though urban planning operates under growing global pressure where cities compete against each other, it is worth recognizing that analyzing the construction of an imagined future reveals the power of the situation. A particular act or narrative needs to meet the requirements of a particular public in a specific situation. This calls for attention to the local, specific identification of foundational narratives that are valuable to the particular situation at hand (Leino & Peltomaa, 2012). For this, urban planning is not using a single set of performative toolboxes. Rather, it is a complex adaptive system that dynamically changes and responds to multiple issues, consistent with the affective elements of the situational context (Yu 2020). Planning visualizations had a role in the case studied and require more attention from planning research in the near future. The visualizations in urban planning can be understood as ‘persuasive visual storytelling’ that has performative means to take part in a planning narration and construction of urban reality.

This study joins the recent concern regarding the cutting down of possible alternative futures and substantial limitation of the public discussion (Hajer & Versteeg 2019; Jokinen *et al.*, 2018). Occasionally, it seems that the role of public participation is to engage in the story that is presented instead of engaging in the planning process. Sometimes ‘thinking big’ manages to suppress the local voices, but there are examples where the distinctive local interpretation of the neighborhood identity has also turned out to be the winning story for the planning officials and investors (Eshuis & Edwards, 2013). Moreover, the public also uses stories in a creative way and opens up new imaginations of alternative futures. The urban development might be sold in the format of stories, but the public still has a say in whether or not they endorse the narrative.

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ORCID

Helena Leino  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3089-7739>

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