

5 Municipal services and modern citizenship in Helsinki in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

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A significant proportion of urban growth in Finland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries occurred on the outskirts or outside of cities. In Helsinki and many other Finnish cities, decision-makers underestimated the speed of urbanization and provided too few affordable plots for the rapidly growing urban population. As a result, those seeking cheap land had to move outside the town plan area or even further beyond the city's administrative boundaries, where individual landowners and property developers offered inexpensive plots. Many working-class people who migrated to cities for work seized this opportunity to have an affordable home. Having grown up in the countryside, they often appreciated a slower pace of life and the opportunity for small-scale farming and gardening. Settling on the outskirts also allowed them to escape the strict rules and regulations of the city and live more freely, constructing homes that suited their budgets and preferences. The haphazard formation of these settlements on the outskirts and outside of cities was a response to slow and rigid urban planning. Town dwellers, landowners and property developers took matters into their own hands, creating new kinds of urban space in the areas surrounding cities.¹

Living on the rural-urban fringe had its benefits but also its downsides. One major drawback was the exclusion from critical social aspects of modern citizenship. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, cities in Finland and other Nordic countries invested in new infrastructure and services to enhance their economic growth and improve the well-being of their citizens. As a result, being a resident of a city increasingly meant being connected to essential utility networks, such as water, gas and electricity, as well as having access to basic welfare services such as primary education and health care.² However, the availability of services differed significantly among residents, depending on their location – whether they resided in the inner city, outside the town plan areas or beyond the city limits.³

Until recently, research has largely overlooked the crucial role of cities in shaping modern citizenship and the associated processes of inclusion and exclusion. Citizenship has traditionally been seen as a formal status of belonging to a nation-state and having specific rights and obligations within it. This narrow

focus on the nation-state has resulted in the social aspects of citizenship being associated with welfare state development rather than the expansion of municipal infrastructure and welfare policies. The significance of *welfare cities* prior to (and following) the emergence of welfare states has been largely ignored.⁴

This chapter will contribute to the discussion about Nordic *welfare cities* by examining the interconnection between municipal services and modern citizenship in Helsinki in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The analysis will begin by providing an overview of the socio-spatial evolution of Helsinki during the nineteenth century. It then will concentrate on the disparate access to infrastructure and services *within* the city, specifically scrutinizing the inequality between the central areas and the adjacent working-class neighbourhood of Kallio. In the final part of the chapter, the study will widen its scope to encompass the working-class settlements *outside* the city that were annexed to Helsinki in the early twentieth century. By looking at the three distinct urban areas and their respective inhabitants – the inner city and the working-class settlements both within and beyond the city borders – the study will investigate who were accepted as ‘full members’ of the urban community with access to essential services and who were not. The study will analyse how policymakers perceived the unequal situation and what measures they took to address it, if any were deemed necessary. In addition to their viewpoints, the analysis will also shed light on the reactions of the inhabitants of the fringe areas and their gradual integration into the urban community.

Central to the discussion about irregular working-class settlements is the way in which municipal authorities defined the rural–urban fringe. Fringe areas were valuable assets for industrializing and expanding cities in Finland and elsewhere in Northern Europe. These areas provided a land reserve for future city development and were an ideal location for many important functions that were not welcome in the central parts of the city. It was therefore crucial for cities to oversee the use of these areas. As major landowners, Nordic cities usually had significant control over urban development within city limits, but they faced challenges in safeguarding areas beyond these boundaries for their future needs. As a result, municipal authorities usually viewed with suspicion uncontrolled development, particularly in areas immediately outside city limits, as it might affect future land use.⁵

The official attitudes towards the rural–urban fringe were also closely linked to the evolving perception of the city itself. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the modern city became a symbol of human innovation and technological progress across the Western world. The city was discursively associated with ‘culture’, while the countryside was increasingly viewed as an embodiment of ‘nature’. The rural–urban fringe between these two areas served as a space where rural and urban elements were still ‘allowed’ to blend and where nature could be converted into culture.⁶ Urban planning policies were an important tool to reinforce the perception of the rural–urban fringe as a transitional zone. The creation of single-purpose spaces was (and is) deeply ingrained in urban planning,

resulting in the fringe being seen as incomplete and in a state of flux due to its blend of different functions. The rural–urban fringe was ‘just something between town and country, with no intrinsic characteristics of its own’. It was not a *place* but only a passing *phase* and therefore not worthy of the same level of attention and resources as the real urban or rural places.⁷

The authorities’ classification of urban core areas as ‘permanent’ and fringe areas as ‘temporary’ was not universally accepted. For example, many working-class families considered their irregular settlements to be their permanent homes. To examine the discourse surrounding the marginalization of fringe areas, multiple sources have been consulted. While most official sources dealing with the fringe areas were produced by appointed and elected officials and experts from different fields, residents also voiced their concerns through petitions and letters to the municipal authorities. Newspapers played a crucial role in facilitating a lively discussion on the topic and *Työmies (The Worker)*, in particular, the first working-class newspaper in Finland, provided an essential platform for residents to express their views. Additionally, many individuals living in the fringe areas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have documented their experiences in their memoirs.

The inner city and the rural–urban fringe in Helsinki in the nineteenth century

As a result of the Napoleonic wars, Finland was separated from Sweden and incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1809. As part of the annexation, Finland was granted autonomy as a grand duchy, and Helsinki, a small market town with a few thousand inhabitants, was chosen as the capital city. This decision had a significant impact on the socio-spatial structure of Helsinki. While the city’s development was in many ways similar to those of other Finnish cities, it also had unique features as the capital and as an important western border city of the Russian Empire. The transformation of Helsinki from a modest wooden town to a monumental capital was spearheaded by J. A. Ehrenström, a military engineer who created a city plan (1817) featuring broad streets, spacious squares and scenic boulevards on a geometric grid layout. Architect J. L. Engel then designed impressive administrative edifices, churches, university buildings, army barracks, hospitals and a handful of private residences for the burgeoning capital.⁸

Only a privileged few in the new capital possessed the means to build or rent homes on par with the impressive public buildings under construction. As a result, the centre of the city was dotted with vacant lots and simple one-story houses that seemed incongruous amidst the monumental surroundings. The nearby ‘suburban’ area, characterized by its wooden homes and ample gardens, attracted many middle-class families who preferred to reside there instead of in the urban core. Meanwhile, the working class had fewer choices available to them. The high land prices and rents in both the city centre and suburban areas put them beyond the reach of a significant portion of the working class, who

instead settled outside the town plan area. The inner urban fringe provided them with an inexpensive place to live, located close to their workplaces. The southern coastal area was a preferred location for fishermen to establish their shacks, while impoverished widows generated income by renting out rooms or operating illicit drinking establishments on the rocky hillsides of Katajanokka located in the eastern part of the city. Those employed as carters, or in the sugar or tobacco factories, favoured the western sections of the city.⁹

The poor initially constructed their huts without authorization. However, in the 1820s, the city's administrative court began renting out land plots outside the town plan area to residents who could not afford to live in the central parts of the city. The city officials clearly stated that this was a temporary arrangement, and the residents would have to vacate the land when it was required for other purposes.¹⁰ The 'temporary nature' of the fringe areas was also reflected in their infrastructure. Unlike the city centre and the adjacent suburban area, which had been flattened and had straight streets intersecting at right angles, the fringe settlements followed the natural contours of the rocky terrain and were not integrated into the street network. As one approached the limits of the planned area, cobbled streets turned into muddy paths, and there were no lanterns to light the way. This meant that at night, and even in midwinter during the day, one had to stumble around in the darkness.¹¹

During the 1870s and 1880s, Helsinki and other major towns in Finland experienced a surge in growth due to the rise of industrialization.¹² To accommodate this growth, the City of Helsinki approved new town plans that gradually expanded the urban core into the surrounding poorer settlements located to the east, south and west. While residents of these settlements were given the option to purchase their land and stay, most of them could not afford it and had to relocate farther from the city centre. As middle-class households took their place, old wooden houses and huts were replaced with new residential and commercial buildings, up to five stories tall, inspired by European models. This transformation led to a more compact townscape, with tall buildings often standing side by side, creating high and dense walls lining the streets.¹³

Infrastructure networks and uneven urban citizenship within the city

The transformation of the inner city in the late nineteenth century involved significant investments of public and private funds into modern urban infrastructure. Installing water and gas pipes, electric wires, drains and tramway tracks brought numerous material and health benefits to the residents, making their daily lives in the central parts of the city more comfortable.¹⁴ Helsinki Water Works started pumping and filtering water from a nearby river in the late 1870s, providing a reliable water supply to households in the city centre. This was a significant improvement, as groundwater was scarce in Helsinki's rocky terrain, and well water was often of poor quality or even undrinkable. The first municipal

sewers were established shortly after, and new middle-class areas built near the urban core in the 1880s were promptly connected to the municipal water and sewer systems.¹⁵

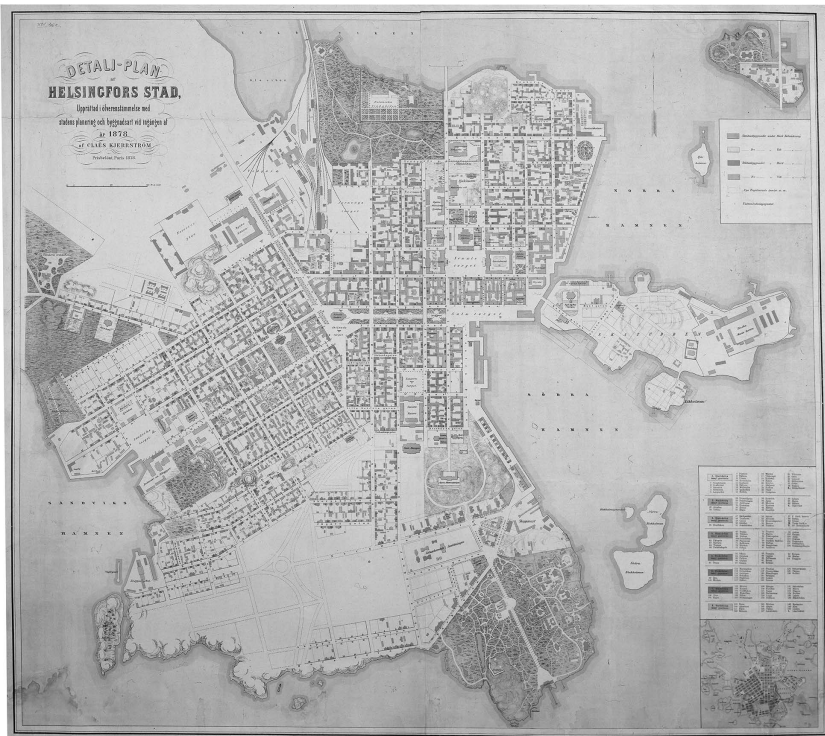
Prior to the turn of the century, Helsinki's gas and electricity supply was in the hands of private companies. These companies focused on selling their products to customers who could afford them, neglecting the less profitable fringe areas. Moreover, the cost-effective approach of simultaneously extending various networks, such as gas and water pipes, led to a further concentration of both private and public services in the urban core.¹⁶ Gas was predominantly utilized for street lighting, shops, offices, schools and hospitals in the inner city. Following the establishment of the first private electricity plant in 1884, electricity quickly gained popularity, and electric wires soon crisscrossed the main streets. Helsingin Sähkövalaistus Osakeyhtiö (Helsinki Electric Light Limited), founded in 1890, was the first company to use high-voltage alternating current, allowing electricity transmission over longer distances. Despite this reform, not all residents had access to electricity, as the distribution area only covered the central areas of the city in the early 1890s.¹⁷

These investments widened the divide between the inner city and the surrounding areas, both in reality and in perception. The central areas were well-organized urban spaces or in the process of becoming so. Buildings were situated close to each other and connected to the same infrastructure networks, creating a seamless urban fabric. Streets, squares and parks were designed to accommodate pedestrians, vehicles, infrastructure systems and street furniture.¹⁸ In contrast, areas outside the zoned urban core were often disorganized and lacked structure. Open meadows, fields and forested areas were interspersed with institutions and service facilities that were not welcome in the urban core, such as a slaughterhouse, a mental asylum and a prison. Additionally, there were a handful of upper- and middle-class summer villas and a growing number of factories, workshops and workers' 'temporary' settlements erected on rented land owned by the city, typically without access to infrastructure services.¹⁹ Connecting these areas located within the city limits but outside the town plan area to urban infrastructure networks was a slow process. As a result, even though the inhabitants of these areas were officially city residents, they remained in many ways disconnected from the urban community.

The boundary between the 'proper' urban areas and their outskirts was always ambiguous and constantly shifting in rapidly expanding cities. It was, however, crucial for municipal policymakers to make this distinction and communicate it effectively, particularly in the 1870s and 1880s, when city governments were assuming many new responsibilities. This division enabled them to control municipal spending effectively. Helsinki policymakers usually followed the principle that infrastructure services should only be constructed after proper planning and zoning had taken place.²⁰ This resulted in working-class people having to wait for these services to become available as there were only a limited number of planned working-class areas at the time. As argued by historian

Sven-Erik Åström, until the early twentieth century, ‘the “better” districts were planned in advance and the working-class districts retrospectively’.²¹ This was not unique to Helsinki but was a common practice in many other Finnish and Nordic cities.²²

The Helsinki authorities used the ‘temporary’ nature of fringe settlements to justify unequal access to infrastructure services. They argued that the settlements outside the town plan area lacked key urban characteristics and were not meant to last. To further emphasize their temporary nature, the settlements were often omitted from city maps or portrayed as non-urban territory. Street and tourist maps typically depicted fringe areas using shades of grey and green to create the impression of a ‘natural’ landscape with forests and rocky terrain. In maps that focused more on the city’s expansion, these fringe areas were portrayed as vacant (white) land awaiting development.²³ A notable example of this type of map was created by city engineer Claes Kjerström in 1878 (Map 5.1). His map, which



Map 5.1. In 1878, the city engineer Claes Kjerström created a map of Helsinki that excluded less ‘significant’ areas or presented them as a land reserve for the city.²⁴ The Kallio district in the north was notably omitted from the map, while the Töölö area in the northeast was depicted as a vacant (white) land awaiting development. Map: Helsinki Region Infoshare.

won an award at the Paris World Fair, resembled colonialist maps from Africa and Australia, in which white ‘unknown’ and ‘uninscribed’ lands awaited civilization.²⁵ Urban mapping of this kind excluded certain areas and people from the ‘real’ city while categorizing others as belonging to it. Furthermore, by portraying fringe areas as empty, the maps presented them as a future development opportunity for the city rather than as urban areas in their own right.

Extending infrastructure services to the outskirts of the city was a costly undertaking, causing both municipal authorities and utility companies to hesitate. However, there were also significant reasons that justified the expansion of these networks, particularly concerning the reliability of the water supply. The demand for improvement was led by affluent villa owners in the fringe areas and industrialists who had relocated their factories there. These stakeholders negotiated with the city administration to extend the municipal water supply system to the outskirts, often agreeing to contribute to the costs. Moreover, state-run institutions, such as hospitals and prisons, also called for the expansion of the water system, further encouraging the city to pursue this endeavour. In response to increasing demand, the city borrowed funds, for example, in 1886, to expand the water pipeline network. This expansion included the Sörnäinen prison and a brewery in the north, the Hietaniemi mental asylum in the west, and a bonemeal and glue factory in Munkkisaari in the southwest. With the extension of water supply and sewerage to factories and public institutions, it became easier also to provide these services to nearby working-class areas.²⁶

Urban reformers also advocated for the extension of infrastructure networks, recognizing their potential to transform cities and promote modern ideals of organized and healthy urban areas. The provision of clean water, efficient waste disposal and improved lighting were seen as crucial in enforcing new standards of hygiene and behaviour, particularly in working-class areas. While not all expectations were met, civil engineering and infrastructure networks played a vital role in enabling municipal authorities to manage diverse urban areas.²⁷ Furthermore, one significant advantage of this infrastructure-based approach was the ability to achieve important objectives through impersonal control. As Christopher Otter points out in reference to nineteenth-century London, ‘tentacular networks of electric wires and water mains could subtly shape and normalize conduct, without any direct human inference, save for the occasional repairman or meter reader’.²⁸

A part of the city, yet still something separate – the neighbourhood of Kallio

The neighbourhood of Kallio, located north of the city centre, illustrates the challenges faced by the municipal authorities in balancing the need to manage the city efficiently while keeping costs low. During the 1870s and 1880s, Kallio became an attractive destination for working-class families due to its proximity to the factories and engineering shops in Sörnäinen. Towards the end of the century, it

emerged as the fastest-growing part of the city. The city authorities planned the location and alignment of future streets and divided the land into plots in 1887 to regulate the growth of the area. However, the uneven terrain posed a significant problem, making it difficult and expensive to construct essential infrastructure such as streets, sewer and water pipes. To avoid the heavy costs associated with the construction of these services, the authorities tried to keep Kallio outside of the approved town plan area for as long as possible.²⁹

Due to the absence of proper municipal services, plots in the Kallio area were leased out at a significantly reduced rate. Tenants paid only 25–30% of the prices charged in the town plan area and were not bound by the stringent building regulations enforced in the city's central district. As a result, the neighbourhood became highly susceptible to fires and epidemics.³⁰ The memoirs of working-class residents from Kallio and other inner fringe settlements have also highlighted the unplanned nature of these areas, including unnamed streets, vacant plots, poorly constructed houses, as well as unlit and unpaved yards that turned muddy during rain.³¹

The process of integrating Kallio into the central parts of the city was indeed slow but proved more successful than that of other working-class settlements located further away from the city centre. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, the municipal authorities began to focus their attention on Kallio's water supply network, with the typhoid epidemic of 1888 being one of the driving forces behind this change.³² The city administration expedited the extension of the water supply networks to Kallio, starting with the installation of public hydrants. After that, property owners could pay to have water pipes installed in their yards or further in individual homes. By 1900, around 85% of the households in Kallio had access to water hydrants in their yards, and 10% had water pipes installed in their homes. At the same time in the central parts of the city, 25% of the working-class people already had running water in their homes, and the new apartment buildings for the middle class were equipped with running water as a standard feature.³³ This comparison of Kallio with the central parts of the city shows that access to the municipal water supply was affected by both the class of the inhabitants and the location of their homes.

The extension of the municipal water system to Kallio encountered resistance from some residents and property owners for two main reasons. First, many were concerned about the visibly murky appearance of the piped water and preferred the taste of (contaminated) well water for making their coffee.³⁴ The second reason was that people were accustomed to using free water from wells and perceived piped water as a costly alternative. However, the municipal policymakers were intent upon ensuring the financial sustainability of the water company and limited free water to a few selected hydrants in the city, with wider access only during epidemics. To promote the adoption of piped water, the authorities filled in and closed wells in areas where piped water was available. As a result, not only the central areas of the city but also Kallio and Sörnäinen became exclusive

users of piped water by the turn of the century. The extension of municipal sewers to Kallio and the improvement of street lighting also enhanced the area's overall appearance and organization, integrating it into the city 'proper'.³⁵ In 1900, the town plan for Kallio was finally approved. These developments were also reflected in city maps, where Kallio now appeared as a planned and organized urban space.³⁶

During the late nineteenth century, the installation of water and sewage systems had a significant positive impact on urban life, leading to improved mortality rates and other related benefits.³⁷ For the Kallio area, however, the implementation of such infrastructure networks also posed major challenges. Despite becoming more connected to the central parts of the city, Kallio and especially the adjacent industrial area of Sörnäinen were still seen as suitable places for facilities and plants that caused environmental damage and loss of amenities to their neighbourhood. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Sörnäinen saw the establishment of many factories and engineering shops but also municipal service facilities. In 1909, Helsinki's first large-scale municipal electricity power plant began operating in Sörnäinen, and the city's gasworks was also relocated to the area in 1911 to reduce smoke and unpleasant odours in the central city. It was argued that the prevailing winds would eliminate any possible nuisances.³⁸ These municipally owned and managed facilities were critical for the functioning of a modern city and provided benefits for the entire city population. However, the environmental burden of these activities was borne by the nearest neighbourhoods, Sörnäinen and Kallio.³⁹

The debate regarding the location of the new municipal slaughterhouse in the early twentieth century also revealed that Kallio and Sörnäinen were still perceived as being on the outskirts of the city. Typically, slaughterhouses were situated in peripheral locations because they were the sites where 'nature' was transformed into 'culture', or more precisely, where animals were converted into hygienic and socially acceptable food for urban consumers.⁴⁰ Sörnäinen was deemed a suitable location for the slaughterhouse due to its location on the outskirts and its connection to the main railway line through a terminal branch line, which facilitated the seamless transportation of animals to the slaughterhouse. The committee considering the matter recommended Sörnäinen, but due to the war and other reasons, the construction of the slaughterhouse was delayed until the 1930s.⁴¹

In the early twentieth century, Kallio residents began voicing concerns about the uneven distribution of public amenities in the city. While their primary concern had traditionally been the high cost of services, complaints about unequal access, for example, to public parks and playgrounds began to gain momentum.⁴² A 1913 article in the newspaper *Työmies* highlighted the stark contrast between the middle-class areas, which had better-maintained amenities, and the working-class areas, which were lacking in green spaces.⁴³ The memoirs of people living in fringe areas also emphasized the absence of well-maintained parks and playgrounds, with 'temporary' green and open places being used instead. Children

and young people usually played and socialized on vacant lots, in fields, among rocks, on beaches and in forests.⁴⁴ Despite being better connected to the central parts of the city, Kallio still retained some of its ‘temporary’ features, remaining in the early twentieth century somewhere between the dichotomy of ‘culture’ and ‘nature’. Despite integrating in many ways into the wider urban community, Kallio residents felt marginalized and used the disparities in infrastructure and other services to demand further inclusion in the community.

Outside the city limits, excluded from the urban community – Hermann and Fredriksberg (Pasila)

During the 1880s and 1890s, irregular suburban settlements also appeared outside of Helsinki’s administrative borders. These new communities were primarily established along main roads and railway lines and attracted a predominantly low-income urban population. While some upper- and middle-class families were also interested in living in the rural atmosphere of the outskirts, they were in the minority. The Helsinki authorities noted in 1912 that around 90% of suburban residents outside of the city were working-class people, with even higher percentages in other Finnish cities.⁴⁵ In contrast to Britain, where the term ‘suburb’ acquired a positive connotation when middle-class families started migrating to the outskirts of cities in the nineteenth century, the negative association of suburbs continued to persist in Finland.⁴⁶

The city authorities in Helsinki were specifically worried about the unplanned settlements that sprang up just outside the city borders. The primary reason for their concern was the negative impact such settlements were believed to have on the health and public order of the city. These communities had limited access to clean water and totally lacked basic sanitation and paved roads. The residents often engaged in animal husbandry, which ran counter to the Helsinki authorities’ efforts to restrict livestock keeping in densely built areas. The absence of effective law enforcement in these settlements was believed to promote a culture of excessive drinking and violence.⁴⁷ Another reason why the irregular communities were considered a problem was the irreversible nature of many changes. The ‘temporary’ structures and practices in these communities often became permanent over time, making it difficult for the authorities to plan future development effectively. The authorities recognized the negative impact of these informal settlements on the city’s long-term planning and were determined to discourage their growth from an early stage.⁴⁸

In the Helsinki area, the first settlements of this kind – Hermann and Toukola – emerged on the lands of Kumtåhti manor outside the northeastern boundary of the city in the 1880s. The landowner offered to sell the area to the city, but the municipal decision-makers considered the price too high. By the early 1890s, when another chance to purchase the land presented itself, the settlements had expanded, and their population had reached around 2,000 people. The unsanitary conditions in the settlements were a significant public health hazard, with

residents relying on wells for their water supply. Due to the overcrowded living arrangements, especially in the Hermanni settlement, most wells were contaminated. Moreover, there was no proper sewage system in place, leading to unhygienic waste disposal.⁴⁹

In 1893, the policymakers of Helsinki finally decided to purchase the land in order to regulate the development of the settlements. The original plan was to improve the infrastructure and other services in the area by installing sewer and water pipes, upgrading roads and investing in primary education and policing. However, the high cost of the land acquisition led to the downsizing or abandonment of many planned improvements. The decision-makers concluded that the city had already invested enough resources in the project and deemed building a sewer unnecessary. They also believed that savings were possible in the reforms planned in education, policing and road construction. Furthermore, the idea of annexing the area to the city was abandoned. The city had already achieved its most crucial goal by securing the ownership of the land and halting further irregular development. The decision to annex was deferred as it would have entailed several obligations and responsibilities.⁵⁰

In the years that followed, the settlements underwent minimal infrastructure upgrades, which left property owners and residents dissatisfied. The first measure was taken by the municipal health authorities, who closed most of the wells in the area due to the water being hazardous to health. This, in turn, led to a severe water shortage, which the property owners and residents tried to solve with the few means at their disposal. The property owners appealed to the city authorities requesting the extension of the water main to the area, while many residents still had to use contaminated water from closed wells. The mounting pressure forced the city to extend the water main and install two public hydrants in the area in 1895. However, this measure did not effectively solve the issue, as many residents could not afford to buy water, and the purchase process was excessively complicated.⁵¹

The city authorities were very reluctant to provide free water to areas outside the city limits. The rationale behind this was that it was unfair to offer free water services to non-residents when the provision of free water within the city was very restricted. After much persistence from the residents of Hermanni, taps were eventually installed in the public hydrants to provide free water. However, the process of accessing free water remained deliberately complicated to discourage use, and those who used it were viewed as having no other option. The compromise was a welcome relief to municipal officials, who were tired of dealing with Hermanni's 'quarrelsome residents', and the reform improved the sanitary situation in the area. Data from 1900 revealed that only 6% of households in Hermanni sourced water from wells, while 83% used public hydrants, either free of charge or by paying. However, compared with the Kallio area, Hermanni was lagging far behind in terms of water accessibility. In Kallio, only 5% of households used public hydrants, while approximately 95% had access to water from hydrants in their own yards or from water taps in their homes.⁵²

Despite making progress in the water issue, the residents of Hermanni faced significant challenges in their attempts to improve their living conditions. The lack of a sewer system was a major issue that the city authorities failed to address, citing the fact that small Finnish towns typically managed well without them. Additionally, the residents of Hermanni requested an extension of the horse tramline from Sörnäinen to their settlement, but their request was not granted. The lack of primary education facilities was another challenge, attributed by the city authorities to the fact that the settlement was not officially part of Helsinki.⁵³

Towards the end of the 1890s, a group of property owners from the Hermanni and Toukola districts abandoned their expectations of the city and turned to the provincial governor with a petition. They demanded a viable solution to the problems at hand if the official annexation to Helsinki was not possible. The issues included the absence of a district physician, inadequate poor law arrangements, the absence of a school building and inadequate infrastructure services, such as running water and street lighting. Initially, the Helsinki city authorities took a defensive stance, citing complicated ground conditions and limited space between buildings as reasons for their inability to provide adequate infrastructure. They also argued that the demands of the property owners and residents were unrealistic and that Hermanni and Toukola were only temporary arrangements until the residents could move to better-planned neighbourhoods in the town plan area.⁵⁴

The city authorities' stance shifted in 1902 when they admitted their failure to provide sufficient housing for the working-class population within the city. They had relied on Kallio to accommodate the working-class residents, but the high rents made it impossible for many people to afford. Consequently, the city authorities recognized that the Hermanni and Toukola settlements could no longer be dismissed as a 'temporary' solution soon to disappear. Hermanni and Toukola were annexed to Helsinki in 1906 yet remained outside the town plan. The city authorities were aware that if the town plan was approved, the existing inhabitants would be priced out of the area. Despite being located within the city, the residents had to wait for an extended period to receive many municipal services self-evident for people living in the central parts of the city and even in Kallio. In 1907, they requested a tramline, but it was not extended to Hermanni until 1914 and to Toukola until 1926. The expansion of other municipal services, including water pipelines, electric lighting and gas distribution, was not significantly advanced until the 1920s and 1930s.⁵⁵

When the growth of the settlements of Hermanni and Toukola on the north-east city border had been halted in the 1890s, a new predicament arose on the northern border in Fredriksberg (Pasila).⁵⁶ Fredriksberg was located just outside the city limits, approximately 3 km north of the city centre and within walking distance of the industrial workplaces in Sörnäinen. The development of Fredriksberg settlement began in the 1890s, and in 1901, the city of Helsinki took action to prevent its expansion. However, it took four years for the city to win the legal battle with the landowner, by which time the suburb had already grown to 1,500

residents. The neighbourhood consisted of wooden houses built on rugged pine-covered hills, ranging in size from single-family homes to low-rise tenements, each with its own distinct character and style.⁵⁷

Fredriksberg was perceived by the Helsinki city officials as a sort of 'Klondike', notorious for its near-lawless frontier life, inadequate planning, poor sanitation, excessive drinking and unruly behaviour. As in Hermanni and Toukola, the residents of Fredriksberg relied on contaminated wells for drinking water, and the absence of sewerage and paved streets exacerbated the poor living conditions. Backyard farming of pigs and chickens was a common practice. The main daily newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, referred to the area as Pigtown, highlighting its un-urban nature.⁵⁸ Although the people living in Fredriksberg felt that the negative reputation of their settlement was unfairly perpetuated by outsiders, they, too, lamented the poor quality or the absence of basic amenities such as schools, health care and police services.⁵⁹

In terms of administration, Fredriksberg was under the jurisdiction of the Helsinki rural municipality, which did not offer the typical urban facilities and services to the settlement and its inhabitants. In 1906, a group of property owners and residents of Fredriksberg collectively requested the incorporation of the settlement into Helsinki by submitting a petition to the Helsinki city authorities. Out of the 492 signatories, the majority commuted to Helsinki for work but resided in the rural municipality and paid taxes to it. The petitioners voiced their discontent with the current arrangement, stating that they did not really belong to either the rural municipality or the city and were deprived of the fundamental advantages usually provided by society, such as primary education, health care and street lighting. They believed that they contributed to the city of Helsinki and deserved to be part of the urban community, entitled to modern amenities.⁶⁰

While a significant portion of the community was in favour of the merger, some expressed concerns regarding potential threats to the identity and community spirit of Fredriksberg posed by the city and its services, particularly the police. These residents feared that the city administration's focus on efficient governance could undermine the unique character of their neighbourhood and transform it into a normative environment. Moreover, it was noted that despite the annexation of Hermanni and Toukola to the city, the residents of these settlements had not experienced a significant improvement in the quality and quantity of services they received.⁶¹

Fredriksberg was not the only problem suburb near Helsinki in the early twentieth century, but it was too close to be ignored. The City Council made the decision to acquire the area in 1908, and by 1912, it was officially annexed to the city. The rural municipality did not oppose the move, considering it a burden to manage the troubled settlement. Following the annexation, the city administration initiated basic infrastructure improvements, such as piped water, sewerage systems and street upgrades. The intention, however, was to do the very minimum.⁶² The city's policymakers viewed Fredriksberg as a settlement with no future, anticipating that the city would expand, and new plans would be



Figure 5.1 In 1912, following Fredriksberg’s annexation to the city, sewer systems were established in the area. A haphazard settlement layout with narrow streets posed a challenge to the installation of the infrastructure networks. Photo: Signe Brander, 1912, Helsinki City Museum.

developed for the area. The old wooden houses would be demolished, and the old Fredriksberg would soon become a distant memory.

The architect Eliel Saarinen complied with the wishes of the Helsinki authorities. In 1918, Saarinen proposed relocating Helsinki’s main railway station to Fredriksberg, which would have served as the city’s primary transportation hub.⁶³ Though not officially approved at the time, the idea of Fredriksberg/Pasila as Helsinki Nord gained ground.⁶⁴ However, the city’s growth projections proved to be overly optimistic, and plans to construct a new Fredriksberg were indefinitely postponed for nearly six decades. In the interim, the ‘temporary’ Fredriksberg carried on (almost) as before: children grew up and adults grew old, ground leases were renewed and the original grey houses were painted in brighter colours. Eventually, in the 1970s, the settlement was dismantled to make way for new housing developments.

Conclusion

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the development of municipal infrastructure and services in Helsinki and other Nordic ‘welfare

cities' was deeply intertwined with broader urban and societal changes. During this period, there was a notable shift in the perception of what services were considered crucial for the daily lives and routines of modern urban citizens and therefore expected to be provided by the city administration. The provision of municipal services was also heavily influenced by changing notions of who was an urban citizen, a full-fledged member of the urban community entitled to essential services, and who could only expect partial access. Additionally, the provision of these services, and particularly the knowledge about unequal access, was increasingly used as a tool for political assertion, advocating for inclusion and challenging the existing power structure.

During the 1870s and 1880s, the Helsinki city administration collaborated with private companies to provide advanced amenities such as piped water, sewers, electricity and gas. These facilities were considered imperative for the central parts of the city, where the middle-class populace resided and worked. The implementation of these services, coupled with other changes, brought about a remarkable metamorphosis of the urban landscape, setting new standards for sanitation and order in the urban core. The services also played a significant role in unifying and demarcating the central part of the city while creating a clear divide between it and the working-class settlements located on the outskirts. These peripheral areas and their inhabitants were viewed as 'temporary' settlements and therefore not entitled to the expensive municipal services.

In the 1890s, Kallio, a working-class neighbourhood near the city centre, underwent a planned integration into the central areas. The process involved the provision of essential municipal services such as water pipes, sewage systems and tramlines to connect the area with the urban core. Despite this, Kallio continued to face some challenges that made it appear socially peripheral. For instance, service facilities that caused environmental nuisances were not uncommon in the area. The settlements of Toukola, Hermanni and Fredriksberg, which were located outside the city limits in the late nineteenth century, were annexed to the city in the early twentieth century. Although the residents of these areas were active in demanding to be recognized as members of the urban community, these areas remained socially on the outskirts of the city. The settlements were seen as temporary arrangements well into the second half of the twentieth century and, therefore, were not entitled to the same level of services as the places in the town plan area.

Notes

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 - 9 Zachris Topelius, “För femtio år sedan,” *Finland*, July 4, 1885; Heikki Waris, “Helsinki-kaupungin historia III.2 (Helsinki: City of Helsinki, 1950), 174–80; Sven-Erik Åström, *Samhällsplanering och regionsbildning i kejsartidens Helsingfors: Studier i stadens inre differentiering, 1810–1910* (Helsinki: City of Helsinki, 1957), 68–76, 121–22.
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- 35 For street lighting, see *KHKK* 1891, 83. Åström, “Kaupunkiyhteiskunta murrosvaiheessa,” 197–198, 204–6.
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