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**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF URBAN
ENVIRONMENT TO THE SENSE OF
BELONGING AMONG QUEER
FEMALE STUDENTS IN TAMPERE**

Bachelor's Thesis
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ABSTRACT

Fanni Vesa: The significance of urban environment to the sense of belonging among queer female students in Tampere
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This bachelor's thesis delves into the experiences of queer women navigating the urban environment. The purpose of the thesis is to provide a perspective on the city's technical challenges through humanistic and geographical means. This includes the study of place experience through the sense of belonging. The materials of the study are mobile interviews with queer female students between the ages 22 to 24, residing in Tampere. The participatory methods of this study also include photographs taken by the participants themselves and GPS (Global positioning system) recordings. The analysis of the research mainly focuses on the interviews, but the images and GPS positioning make it easier to illustrate the results.

The word 'queer' refers to a person or group belonging to a sexual minority. The literature review of the thesis briefly delves into queer history as well as feminist research. For decades, feminist criticism of urban planning has unraveled constructs that support the subordinate position of women and femininity compared to men and masculinity. Queer research has shaken up constructs supporting heteronormativity.

The theoretical framework of the study is based on the sense of belonging the four components of belonging: competencies, opportunities, motivations and perceptions. The sense of belonging is largely defined as primitive desire to find places and people around you that strengthen the feeling of safety and "being at home" as well as the feeling of being seen and heard.

This study focuses largely on the fourth of the above-mentioned components, perceptions of belonging, and this is investigated through Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. The analysis aims to understand queer women's personal experiences and perceptions of the elements of space in formation of the sense of belonging. The research concludes with four different main themes: havens of tranquility, symbols of inclusion, displays of diversity and clues of sustainability. These themes were defined from the interviewees' own experiences, encounters during the interviews, and their general perceptions.

As a result of the thesis, it is concluded that queer female students' sense of belonging in the urban space is largely built on the experience of similarity, the display of difference in the urban environment, and the elements that strengthen the accepting atmosphere. Based on the results, the study proposes the city of Tampere to have a stronger line for inclusion in the urban environment, greater visibility for art, architecture and other channels of self-expression, and a greater implementation of spaces that enable communal activity.

Keywords: sense of belonging, queer women, lesbian, LGBTQ+, queer city planning

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Fanni Vesa: Tampereen kaupunkiympäristön merkitys kuulumisen tunteeseen queer-naisopiskelijoiden keskuudessa

Kandidaatintutkielma

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Tämä kandidaatintutkielma syventyy seksuaalivähemmistöön kuuluvien naisten kokemuksiin kaupunkiympäristössä liikkussa. Tutkielman tarkoituksena on antaa näkökulmia kaupungin teknisiin haasteisiin humanistisin ja maantieteellisin keinoin. Tähän sisältyy paikkakokemuksen tutkimus kuulumisen tunteen kautta. Aineistona on Tampereen keskusta-alueella toteutetut liikkuvat haastattelut 21–24-vuotiaiden tamperelaisten queer-naisopiskelijoiden kanssa. Osallistaviin menetelmiin kuuluvat myös osallistujien itse ottamat valokuvat ja haastatteluiden GPS-tallenteet. Tutkimuksen analyysi keskittyi pääosin haastatteluihin, mutta valokuvat ja GPS-paikannus helpottivat tulosten avaamista ja havainnollistamista.

Queer-sanaa voidaan käyttää adjektiivina tai substantiivina viitaten seksuaalivähemmistöön kuuluvaan henkilöön tai ryhmään. Avatakseni queer-naisten kokemuksia, tutkielman kirjallisuuskatsaus perehtyy lyhyesti queer-historiaan ja -teoriaan sekä feministiseen tutkimukseen. Kaupunkisuunnitteluun kohdistuva feministinen kritiikki on vuosikymmenten ajan tuonut esille rakenteita, asenteita ja tottumuksia, jotka eri tavoin tukevat naisen ja feminiinisyyden alisteista asemaa mieheen ja maskuliinisuuteen nähden. Queer-tutkimus taas ravistelee käsityksiä heteronormatiivisuutta kannattavista konstruktoista.

Tutkielman teoreettinen viitekehys pohjaa kuulumisen tunteeseen (engl. sense of belonging), johon Allen tutkimusryhmineen on määritellyt neljä eri komponenttia: kompetenssit (competencies), mahdollisuudet (opportunities), motivaatiot (motivations) ja käsitykset/havainnot (perceptions). Kuulumisen tunne on pitkälti määritelty pritiiviseksi tarpeeksi löytää ympärilleen paikkoja, tiloja, elementtejä ja ihmisiä, jotka vahvistavat tunnetta turvallisuudesta, kotoisuudesta sekä nähdäksi ja kuulluksi tulemisesta.

Tämä tutkimus keskittyy suurilta osin yllä mainituista komponenteista neljanteen, käsityksiin kuulumisesta, ja tätä tutkitaan tulkitsevan fenomenologisen analyysin (Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis) avulla. Analyysillä pyritään ymmärtämään queer-naisten henkilökohtaisia kokemuksia ja käsityksiä tilan elementeistä kuulumisen tunteen muodostumiseen ja muokkautumiseen. Tutkimuksessa päädyttiin neljään eri pääteemaan: turvallisuuden turvapaikat (havens of tranquility), inklusion symbolit (symbols of inclusion), näytöt diversiteetistä (displays of diversity) sekä viitteet kestävydestä (clues of sustainability). Nämä teemat rakentuivat haastateltavien omista kokemuksista, kohtaamisista haastatteluiden aikana sekä heidän yleisistä käsityksistään.

Tutkielman lopputulemana queer-naisopiskelijoiden kuulumisen tunteen urbaanissa tilassa arvioidaan rakentuvan pitkälti samankaltaisuuden kokemuksesta, erilaisuuden näyttämisestä kaupunkiympäristössä ja hyväksyvää ilmapiiriä vahvistavista elementeistä. Tulosten perusteella Tampereen kaupungille ehdotetaan vankempaa linjaa inklusion sisällyttämiseen kaupunkiympäristössä, suurempaa näkyvyyttä taiteelle, arkkitehtuurille ja muille itseilmaisun kanaville sekä enemmän yhteisöllisen aktiviteetin mahdollistavien tilojen implementaatiota.

Avainsanat: kuulumisen tunne, queer-naiset, seksuaalivähemmistöt, kaupunkisuunnittelu

Tämän julkaisun alkuperäisyys on tarkastettu Turnitin OriginalityCheck –ohjelmalla.

PREFACE

So many people to thank – so many have helped me regardless of the time of the day. I am beyond grateful for the efforts of my supervisor Jonathon Taylor, and his endless devotion towards his students. I would also like to thank the other professors Salla Jokela, Markus Laine and Anna-Kaisa Viitanen. And a big thanks to all the participants of the study!

Those who have helped me most likely know what a rollercoaster the thesis writing has been with changing the topic after four months of writing, renovating a van to live in (as a proper lesbian would) and losing a person really close to me. I want to send the purest “kiitos kaikesta” to this person, my grandpa – I really wish I could show the end result to you.

Thank you Mom for listening and reading. Thank you Clara for believing.

Las Palmas, December 14th 2023

Fanni Vesa

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

GPS Global positioning system

LGBTQI+ Referring to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex (plus). The community of people belonging to a sexual or gender minority.

IPA Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. A method of analysing data with the focus on individual experience.

PDA Public display of affection

1. INTRODUCTION

On the 7th of June 2023, Helsingin Sanomat, the Finnish capital news, informed that Tampere had been having some repeating complications with ensuring safety in a place aimed for mainly sexual minorities (Salmela, 2023). Mixei, a bar famous within the LGBTQI+ community in Tampere, and its customers were repeatedly facing some insulting words and even fearful acts. The letter combination LGBTQI+ refers to the community of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons (Social Protection & Human Rights, n.d.). This incident included verbal insults, throwing of objects towards the place and people, and even a violent encounter, and was thus seen as a radical and direct attack on individuals and minorities. This describes the fear that people of the LGBTQI+ community face in their everyday lives.

“What is the city but the people?”
William Shakespeare, in *Coriolanus*

This study offers a glimpse to the city through the lens of a queer woman. The word ‘queer’ is most often used when describing a person or a group of people whose sexual or gender identity do not match the traditional ideas about sex and gender (*Oxford Dictionary, n.d.*). It can be used both as an adjective or a noun. This research builds upon both the queer theory, which has the purpose of shaking the constructions of heteronormativity (Doan, 2011) and the feminist theory, which has for decades critiqued the gender inequalities and tried to find their root causes (Kern, 2020).

Being queer and being a woman, can both be viewed as a safety-hazard in a city (Doan, 2011; Kern, 2020; Meyer, 2003). Not only do queer women face issues regarding safety but they can have a harder time finding the people and places to connect with compared to the people adhering to norms of the heteronormative society (Grant et al., 2021; Marlin et al., 2023). Some of these connections can be described as the *sense of belonging*, the feeling of safety and “being at home” (Antonsich, 2010) and the lack of these connections can lead to problems relating to health, such as depressive symptoms (McLaren et al., 2008). My aim in this study is to give voice to the people who experience this crossing of being a woman and being queer in their everyday lives.

Queerness has been studied quite widely starting from the development of queer theory (Doan, 2011). Being a woman has been studied even more, yet not by far as much as being a man (Kern, 2020). The study of the meaningfulness of a place, and the definition of a place itself, started integrating and taking on an important field of study in urban

planning in the early 70s (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977). In the following decade, the sense of belonging and took its stance in mainstream city planning (Wood & Waite, 2011). My research focuses on these topics – being a queer woman belonging in the and into the city. The queer studies in the field of urban planning, with or without focus on sense of belonging, persist to focus mainly on gay men and their experiences (Adler & Brenner, 1992; Doan, 2015). This is the research gap to which I am fitting my study in.

First, in chapter two, I have acquired a literature review of the previous study and the theoretical framework, which I will build my study on. This chapter will present the queer and feminist theory and how they relate to my study more in depth as well as the history of queer women in a city. Further on, I will present the previous study on the sense of belonging and a four-component integrative framework of belonging, by Allen et al. (2021). These components include competencies, opportunities, motivations and perceptions, and will be elaborated in the literature review. Finally, I present the queer politics of Tampere regarding city planning and policies for urban environment.

In the chapter three, I present the methodology of the study. I chose to approach the issues with participatory research methods, ending up with mobile interviews, photographs taken by the participants and global positioning system (GPS) tracking of the interviews. These were analysed with a method of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), with the focus on individual experiences. The results of the analysis are presented in chapter four. This is where the framework (components of belonging) will be also applied to the results.

Lastly, in chapters five and six, I discuss the links between queer women and the sense of belonging and conclude what are the impacts of urban environment in that. I also review the components of belonging and how they relate to my study. In the last paragraphs, I will be discussing the possible actions the city of Tampere could take in order to make the city a more inclusive place.

The purpose of this study is not to give a view of 'queer women' that would be generalizable to the whole cohort or community, but to delve into the emotions and thought processes behind the concept of sense of belonging, amongst this group of queer women. Considering all these notions I have adjusted my research question in a following matter:

How does the urban environment impact the sense of belonging of queer female students in Tampere?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following chapters I present the already conducted research on my subject: designing meaningful places for queer women and enhancing the sense of belonging. I gathered the sources from libraries such as Google Scholar and Andor (the library of the Tampere University) using keywords as queer women, LGBT(QI+), city/urban planning, inclusive city, sense of belonging, meaningfulness of a place and all kinds of variations and mixes of those.

Firstly, to define what it means to be a queer woman, it needs to be studied what it means to be queer and what it means to be a woman. This is something I present, in the light of previous research, in the section 2.1 and going forward, I place that in an urban context. In the section 2.2, I present the theory behind the concept *sense of belonging*, and, in general, what does the meaningfulness of a place mean. Chapter 2.3 presents the politics of the city of Tampere in the queer context.

It is worth noting that in Finland the study of the LGBTQI+ community is still quite in its infancy (Rossi, 2015), especially in relation to city planning. But much to my delight, while gathering the previous research for this, I also scrolled through Trepo (the institutional repository of Tampere University) and noted the queer study to be a growing trend, at least in the undergraduate studies like mine.

2.1 Queers, women and queer women in a city

In the 1970s, when the feminist theory started unravelling the ways we thought of everyday life, the feminist critique regarding urban planning pointed out that environments are, mostly, planned to suit the needs of men (Beebeejaun, 2017). Though the world has gotten far from the Victorian days, women still are, in many ways, living inferior lives compared to men (Bondi, 1992; Kern, 2020). These small but in no means trivial and at worst, fatal, differences vary from setting the office temperatures to favour the thermal comfort of men (Belluck, 2015) to designing airbags for average male dimensions (Bergmann, 2019). In short, the patriarchy includes the hierarchy which suggests that females and femininity, in our society, are seen as less valuable than males and masculinity (Juvonen et al., 2010).

Kern (2020) contributes largely in the discussion of this man-made world, and women claiming space in it, in her book *Feminist City*. She describes how a woman walking down the street is seen in ways that no man is: being alone (without a man or children,

so not yet complete by the heteronormative ways), having a baby (being thus an inconvenience for many in public places with a smelly and loud baby), carrying a baby (invitation to being touched and having her belly rubbed), being too masculine (threat to male hegemony and not pleasing the male gaze), being too feminine (supposed sex worker) and/or too rude or too nice (hinting that a woman is somebody's – a man's – property and should be pleasing the man).

Big issue regarding women is safety, which fortunately is quite widely studied, but unfortunately remains an issue today. Women are shown to be fearful and this fear has been normalized; women naturally organize their lives to avoid the possible scary situations (Koskela, 1999). According to Koskela (1999), this leads to a loop where women fear because being inferior to men and thus are forced to avoid a place, allowing for the gendered power in relation to the space. Koskela concludes it by saying “sexual harassment reminds women every day that they are not meant to be in certain spaces”.

Funnily enough, the fear of sexual harassment and its reinforcement in news and entertainment, steers away the attention from even more prevalent crimes. This is something where patriarchy finely culminates in; showing women that they can claim their place in the city, making a city an unattractive and even dangerous place for women and thus enforcing them to go home to the protection of the bread winner, a man, who, paradoxically, is the most likely perpetrator for the woman. (Kern, 2020)

Even with change happening, the world does not change overnight and the urban and architectural features as well as the structural heteronormativity are durable constructs and both support each other (Kern, 2020). In her book, Kern also notes that women keep being underrepresented in decision-making in the field of architecture and city planning. Still, that is not the fundamental issue here – even if women would be taking over these fields, without proper research the patriarchal norms prevail (Bondi, 1992).

The cities are not solely planned for men, but especially for white, able-bodied, cis-gender and heterosexual men. When the city is planned in line for the needs, desires, values, habits and plans of this “average” citizen, many other groups are being overlooked and overshadowed, for example, queer folks (Kern, 2020; Lehtonen, 2003). After the word or words referring to ‘queer’ were adapted into the research world, only then was the word ‘heteronormative’ invented and questioned (Rossi, 2015). Heteronormativity is the hegemonial norm that the male-female partnership is the only real and suitable form of a romantic relationship (Lehtonen, 2003).

Queer people, the LGBTQI+ community, have always existed, surely, and they have had to fight for their place in the city (Adler & Brenner, 1992; Doan, 2015). In the history of

sexual minorities, there have been many hinders; the riot of the Stonewall Inn, where the trans and gay rights were fought for, HIV/AIDS epidemic that led to disappearance of gays viewed as “structural decline” and gentrification pressures of gay-oriented areas where now artists and queer folks do not afford to live in anymore (Doan, 2015).

In literature and research, one thing that has to be noted is that the world develops and the rights of queers have greatly improved in short period of time, so something that touched queer people ten years ago might not be relevant at all today (Taavetti et al., 2015). Unfortunately, in queer research as any other research, the population of the studies have mainly been men, in this case, white, gay men (Doan, 2015). Thus, looking into these studies, which often can include lesbians as well and might offer some insight to the lives of LGBTQ community, they might still be lacking in many parts of representation. Many of the studies focusing on gay men can be somewhat generalized to gay women; gay men cannot hold hands in public without the fear of harassment or even violence, but neither can gay women (Doan, 2011). But the standpoints of these studies regarding the different groups can be different. Thus, with the possibility of generalization and the lack of research, it is often needed to draw lines between different minorities.

The group of interest in this study, queer women, is something that has not been widely studied in Finnish research. This group is not conforming to either of the hegemonies: patriarchy nor heteronormativity. To understand this group of people in urban context, we need to understand both queers and women, and recognise the studies conducted on these two on the field of city planning. In the light of this literature review, it could be argued that queer women encounter discrimination due to both their gender and sexuality, hence being an exceptionally important group of study.

When it comes to queer space, it needs to be bared in mind, that rather than referring to the traditional and physical spaces as gay villages or gay bars that can come to mind, queer space more often is something more mobile and transitory, such as the Gay Pride (Doan, 2015).

2.2 Sense of belonging

The two words in humanistic geography, that people do not often stop to think about, but in this context are worth explaining, are *space* and *place*. A space becomes a place when an individual applies meaning to that place in some way, often through an experience (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977). Place can thus be seen as a subjective experience, and the

meaningfulness of a place is dependent on the experiencer (Ponto, 2017). When a person senses a place as meaningful to them, they often sense a feeling of belonging to that place as well (Allen et al., 2021; Antonsich, 2010; Relph, 1976).

Already Maslow determined belonging as a fundamental need for a human to forge relationships with others (1943) and this definition of belonging being a basic need that almost all individuals try to satisfy, widens to general agreement (Allen et al., 2021). The human's sense of belonging is seen to concretise with the feeling of being "at home" (not referring to the domestic space that can contribute to the oppression of women, but rather the feeling of familiarity and safety) and being seen and understood (Antonsich, 2010; Syrjäla, 2022). Everybody belongs somewhere, and this belonging or not-belonging is often less conscious and voluntary than people think (Wood & Waite, 2011).

Studies have explained how the sense of belonging is especially important for queer people and the lack of it can lead to problems with health, such as depressive symptoms (McLaren & Castillo, 2020). However, the behind the scenes of sense of belonging is not as widely researched (Marlin et al., 2023) and the construct itself is still searching for its form (Allen et al., 2021). Also, even though belonging has been studied, it often focuses on ethnic and religious affiliations, dismissing many more, such as gender or sexuality (Wood & Waite, 2011). In addition, as mentioned in the earlier chapter, the studies conducted on queer folks, tend to dig into the experiences of gay men, specifically, and thus represent only a subgroup within a minority and cannot be generalised to all queer people.

The study on the sense of belonging is still lacking conclusions on what can people do to fulfil this need. Antonsich, in *Searching for Belonging* (2010), after suggesting an analytical framework for the sense of belonging, sends a message to future researchers:

"[I]t seems more plausible to think of contemporary societies as characterized by the co-presence of a plurality of forms of belonging, differently imbricated in space and variously constituted in relation to the permeability of their identity boundaries. Trying to make sense of this plurality is also another task that today awaits students of belonging."

Followingly, Allen et al. (2021), define four different components of belonging. This integrative framework could help in understanding and measuring the sense of belonging of individuals and communities. Drawing from the work of Allen et al., a short presentation of the four components follows:

1. *Competencies* indicate the existing skills and abilities of an individual to be able to connect with people and places. This is a set of both subjective and objective factors and include, for example alignment with social norms. Often, these skills

can be developed to some extent, such as improving self-awareness and verbal and nonverbal communication.

2. *Opportunities* to belong refer to the availability of possibilities to belong. These include (groups of) people, spaces and places that enable belonging with, for instance, offering help, integration, networks, and support groups. Opportunities to belong can also refer to the availability of like-minded people and enjoyable past-time activities, and the access to these.
3. *Motivations* can be addressed as the desire to connect to people and places. This is seen as a subjective attribute and it depends on the individual, how strongly they seek out social experiences, encounters, and relationships. Motivations or the lack of them can arise from past experiences: rejection leading to weak motivation and positive experiences to motivated manifesting of the experiences to connect.
4. *Perceptions* of belonging emerge from an individual's subjective cognition of their experiences. An individual might have all the boxes checked, relating to competencies, opportunities and motivations, and manifest these in their daily life, yet still feel dissatisfied in the context of belonging.

Marlin et al. (2023) conducted a study on the young people's sense of belonging using this framework of Allen et al. They suggest that the perceptions influence other three components, rather than all of the four components being equally important with the facilitation of the sense of belonging, which is referred to in the work of Allen et al. Marlin et al. found that in their study, the places where the participants perceived low levels of social acceptance, their sense of belonging was also detracted. Vice versa, they suggest that the inclusivity of one's environment enhances their sense of belonging. This inclusivity is one's perception and it emerges from the cues in the environment, symbolizing either exclusion or inclusion. Hence, by Marlin et al., the inclusivity of a place could be imagined as well.

2.3 Queer politics in Tampere city planning

I will later on call some propositions for action to the city of Tampere, thus it is appropriate to shortly revisit the queer politics of the city. In this section I present the policies for equal city planning in the queer context.

In the equality and non-discrimination plan of Tampere for years 2023 to 2025 (Tampereen kaupunki, 2022), the main statement goes "Let's make an equal Tampere to-

gether”. In that plan, it is stated that the city of Tampere acts as a “home for all” regardless of, for example, sexuality and gender. The plan emphasizes the importance of understanding the intersectionalities in order to fight discrimination. One of the plan’s guidelines for city work, is the increase of knowledge on these intersectionalities.

In the plan, the city commits to operate in transparent ways, to advance equity and equality and to adhere to the principles of good administration and leadership. To ensure the advancement of equality, an equality coordinator has been assigned. The actions to be taken in the forthcoming years try to increase the education of decision-makers and make more advanced and aware decisions regarding the gender inequality. The city has reported increased levels of representative material in their content and will increase that in the future. For safety, the city has agreed on arranging training of principles for a safer space as well as training for intervening in discriminative acts. (Tampereen Kaupunki, 2022)

In the safety plan of Tampere, the city commits to improve the state of places perceived as unsafe by the residents as well as the general safety of urban environment. This will be done by improving, for example, lighting and the sense of safety in the city. (Tampereen kaupunki, 2022)

3. METHODS

This study is conducted using a participatory approach, in which the idea is exchanging the expert of the researcher and the local knowledge of the participants of the study (Pyyry, 2012). In some studies, it is stressed that the idea is not to see the researcher as the producer of the knowledge but rather as the encourager for the participants to do so (Gallagher, 2008) and making the participants and researcher learn together (Pyyry, 2012).

This research builds on three different types of data: go-along interviews, GPS tracking of the interviews and photographs taken by the participants. This multi-method approach of the study allowed for a wider expression of the participants' views and voices, also balancing the possible power relations between the researcher and the participant (Alderson & Morrow, 2011).

Ponto (2017) went on with a similar approach studying young people's daily lives within a city. I drew from that research and will be building on it. Whereas she was studying the daily lives of children and young people in an urban setting I am studying the daily experiences of queer women. Ponto explained her choice of methods with that she studied a vulnerable group and a group that might have different ways of expressing themselves, or difficulties in vocalizing their views and thoughts. She figured that this type of methodology can delve deeper to the many facets of a lived lives of young people.

My study is not that different, although I am studying people in the beginning of their adulthood and not children necessarily, but I still see them being a vulnerable group that can have difficulties in making their voices be heard. This type of a study also needs methods outside of the traditional ways, as the physicalities of a space as well as the multi-leveled thoughts behind them might need multiple levels of expression (Antonsich, 2010; Ponto, 2017; Pyyry, 2012).

I have to note, as a queer person myself, I dislike this strong distinction of my study group specifically to queer women; gender is a spectrum and so is sexuality. Though I feel like the word queer is comprehensive enough to let people within the group express themselves freely, yet being female is much more binary. I was interviewed, not too long ago, for a study about queer women, even though I can't say I am that 100 per cent. This was just an assumption of me through knowing me. I made similar assumptions of people with my study, just making sure that people are okay with me referring to them as "queer

women”. As for I am only writing my Bachelor’s Thesis, this type of distinction had to be made, so to not make an overflowing overview of queer people in general.

3.1 Go-along interviews

Go-along or walk-along interview is a mobile technique of gathering data with walking alongside of the participants whilst interviewing them (Kusenbach, 2003). The interest in mobile methods have grown in recent years as they are seen as giving more perspective to the subjective experience of the participants in regards how they go on with their daily lives in different environments (Kusenbach, 2003; Ponto, 2017). The different environments can, among actual places, include memories of places and imaginary places, which highlights how the perception of space is highly subjective (Relph, 1976).

These mobile methods, as the go-along interviews used in this study, can hence help to understand this subjective experience, by taking the daily routes of the participants to noticing the elements in the environment the participant notes and are, as such, seen especially important with understanding issues as identity and power (Kusenbach, 2003). This method allows to study “the interplay of experiences, mobility and daily life” (Ponto, 2017).

Kusenbach (2003) describes the pros of go-along interviews as being more place-sensitive and dynamic and Ponto (2017), greatly drawing from Kusenbach’s study, highlights the importance of mobile interviewing when studying place experiences.

Before the interviews, I asked the participants to think of some places meaningful to them, in good or bad. I did not specify that too much or give too definite terminology to describe what it means for a place to be meaningful, as that was something I wanted to hear from the participants themselves. I also tried to make the setting seem as informal as possible, a few friends hanging out, to allow for as natural experience as possible. This is something that go-along interviews try to alleviate as well, as it can be easier to talk with natural pauses in speech (Ponto, 2017).

For the interview itself, I kept it very open, letting the interviewee guide the discussion. I had a set of questions close, to guide the discussion back to the topic if gotten too far. I figured that this way, I allowed for natural encounters in the physical environment.

I chose the method of go-alongs to get this tad bit deeper glimpse of the participant’s life. It allows the participant to navigate in an urban setting, and simultaneously, to express it. When the participant themselves get to choose the path and tell the reasoning behind it, I can get each participant’s individual views, rather than me choosing the places of

interest. Not only can we visit the places meaningful to the participant, but I, as a researcher, get to experience the journey with the participant, where they can naturally grasp interest in something emotion-awakening. Most of the material used in this study arose from these interviews as they give the most in-depth descriptions of experiencing the urban environment, as where the photographs and the GPS tracking were more supporting these described experiences.

The interviews were conducted in Finnish, as that was the spoken language of every participant. There were five (n=5) participants altogether, four of which wanted and felt comfortable to do it in pairs with a person they were already close with, and one who I interviewed individually. All three of the interviews lasted over an hour, the shortest one (with only one participant) amounting in one hour and ten minutes, and the longest one being one hour and 35 minutes. After transcription, the interviews altogether summed up in 63 pages of text.

Following Ponto's (2017) study, and noticing how she had chosen a well suited analysis method, I, as well, subjected the collected interview data to Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) the goal in mind to achieve an understanding of the subjective experiences. With IPA, the researcher tries to understand the interviewee, who tries to understand the phenomenon in question – thus IPA is, namely, an interpretation of the researcher, of an interpretation of the interviewee (Liimakka, 2013). This suited my study well, as it dives deep to the individual experience and the emotions behind it (Ponto, 2017). IPA includes the steps of reading and re-reading the materials, coding the materials individually to themes with a few different steps, searching for connections in the themes, and only after that, the researcher goes further to find repeating themes to apply meaning to the experiences of the participants (Peat et al., 2019). In conclusion, IPA values the deeper understanding of an individual's emotions, rather than vague overall themes happening to repeat in the collected sample.

In the analysis, the participants often expressed their feelings of "the lesbian": how a queer woman is often perceived, or how they should act or are perceived to act. I tried to grasp these thoughts and discuss them further in my study, still expressing the distinction between the participants own emotions versus their perceived thoughts of others in the community, or what they think the public thinks. As stated, in its essence, IPA is the researcher's perception of the interviewees' experiences including their understanding of other people's perceptions.

I coded the interviews beginning from some repeating themes as nature, art, relationships, community and architecture, and continued to code the contents further to find

emergent themes. Merging the interviews, I found recurring elements and analysed the repetitive themes in order to understand and assign meaning to place experiences of the participants.

3.2 GPS tracking and photographs

The interviews included the possibility for the participants to take pictures. Photographs are a participatory method of research and are especially used in studying children as they are an easy way to engage participants (Ponto, 2017). For this study, the use of photographs was mainly to get the attention of the participants from the discussion to the urban environment. I figured that way, the participants could get out of their heads, act more informal and really ponder upon what they see around them. The photographs also work as a great illustration of the places important to the interviewees through the lens of the interviewee, the experiencer.

I also GPS tracked the interviews. This was mainly because the possibilities that open with mapping of the results. With conducting go-along interviews, it also helped with remembering the places and routes of discussion when analysing the results. The tables and maps in this thesis could have not be drawn without the GPS location. The GPS trackings are not included to this thesis as an appendix, in order to secure the privacy of the participants: many started or ended the go-alongs from or to their homes and each of the participants at least wanted to walk by them.

3.3 Ethical questions of the study

As for I am studying a vulnerable group, this section will cover the ethical questions of this study, both arisen before the interviews and analysis and during or after them.

Firstly, I note that I am interviewing a group of people who, because of their sexuality, face a threat of negative feedback because of this study. Already going in public as a group of women and discussing the matters touching sexual minorities, can put the participants in a vulnerable state. This is why I have paid extra attention on first, making sure of the anonymity of the study and the proper management of the materials, second, ensuring that the participant's consent and that they know what they are consenting and that the consent can be retracted at any point of the study, stopping the interview immediately and lastly, enforcing going out during broad daylight and avoiding possible unsafe spaces. To increase the anonymity of the interviews, instead of referring to the participants with their name, age, gender or sexuality, I used the character combination of "P[number]" as in "participant number [1...5]".

For the interview itself, I wanted to create as accepting atmosphere as possible, due to the personal matter of the study. This was acquired through knowing the participants beforehand, discussing other informal matters before the interview and letting the participants set the pace and depth of the interview. I did not ask any very personal questions and made sure that the participants understood that they can either steer the discussion, ask to change the topic or stop completely, if facing distress.

4. RESULTS

After analysing the data and trying to answer the question: “How do urban spaces impact the sense of belonging?”, several themes emerged that portray both the what and whys of the topic. The analysis concluded in four prevalent themes describing the places and the elements that affected the sense of belonging: havens of tranquility, symbols of inclusion, displays of diversity and clues of sustainability. These themes as well as quotes from participants are presented in this chapter. In the quotes “P[number]” refers to the different participants. Table 1 presents the themes and corresponding places, forms of appearance and the feelings evoked. Every chapter concludes in linking the interviews to the framework of the study, four components of belonging by Allen et al. (2021), but mainly to the fourth one, perceptions of belonging.

Table 1. The themes that emerged in the study and how and where they appeared, as well as what feelings they evoked in the participants (arranged in order of appearance)

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Appearing in</i>	<i>Places</i>	<i>Feelings attached</i>
<i>Havens of tranquility</i>	natural elements, parks, bodies of water, trees	Sorsapuisto park, Tammerkoski rapids, Sorlammi pond, Hämeenkatu, Hervanta forests and lakes, Koskipuisto park, Pyynikki Natural Reserve	unwinding, memories of childhood, feeling safe, feeling of “being at home”, being hidden from observers, being alone, free expression of oneself
<i>Symbols of inclusion</i>	pride flags, stickers, posters, advertisement, distinct lighting	Hämeenkatu, Tampere Central Square, Mixei night club, Klubi night club, tram, Hoax restaurant, Kaijakka bar, Whatever restaurant	feeling of inclusion, feeling of being welcomed, feeling cold and unwelcomed (in the presence of exclusive elements)
<i>Displays of diversity</i>	architecture, art, places of gathering, buildings of culture, communal places	Tampere Central Square, Finlayson area, red-brick buildings next to the Tammerkoski rapids, Laukontori square, Tampere Theatre	appreciation, sense of diversity, happiness, liberty for self-expression, increasing knowledge, sense of community, feelings of warmth
<i>Clues of sustainability</i>	restaurants, coffee shops, thrift stores, possibilities for recycling	UFF, Hoax restaurant, Oldie, Hämeenkatu	feeling of relating to the environment, sense of community, love for living beings

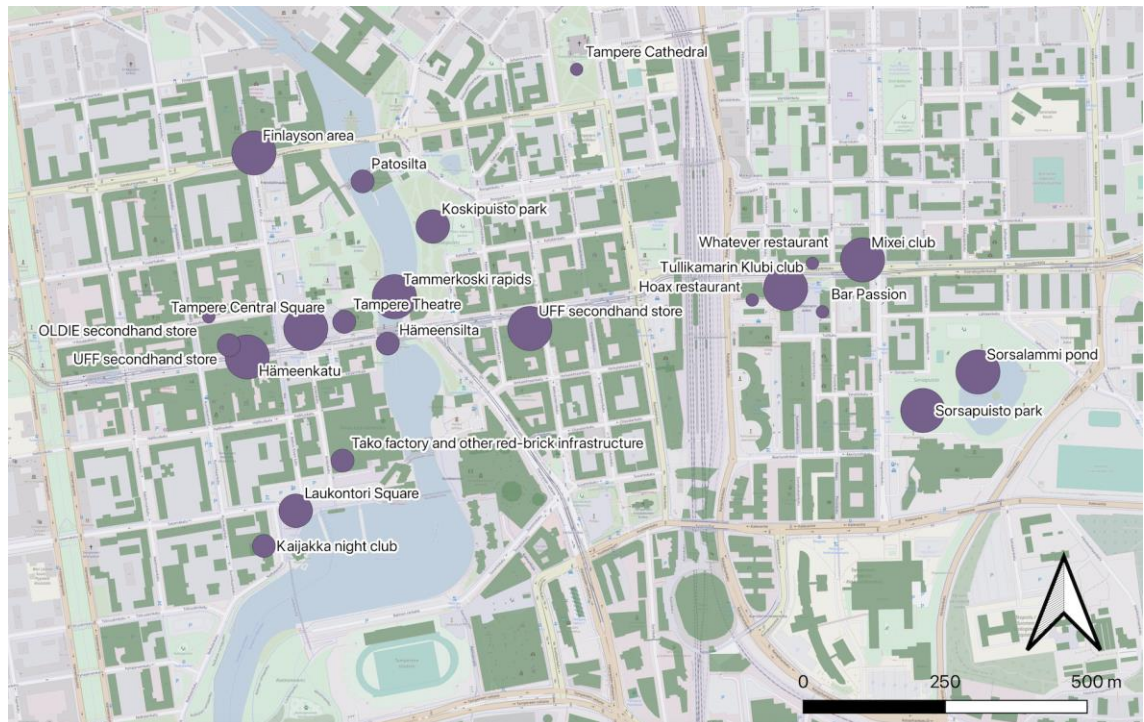


Figure 1. A map illustrating the places of belonging that emerged in the interviews. Points are gradually increasing according to the number of mentions in the interviews

I arranged a map showing the places people attached feelings of the sense of belonging to, describing the significance of the place by the number of mentions in the interviews. (Figure 1). I also added the interlaps between the GPS trackings as one mention. Only places of at least two mentions are shown. The map is missing the places mentioned outside the city centre of Tampere such as Hervanta and its lakes and forests, Kauppi forest, Hiedanranta and Pyyrikki Natural Reserve.

4.1 Havens of tranquillity

Each of the participants wanted to take a route that went through a park and across the Tammerkoski rapids of Tampere. Nature arose multiple times in all the interviews in many ways and different meanings were assigned to it. All the participants mentioned parks and water being somewhat meaningful to them, and, in addition, three mentioned specifically seeing trees and seasonal changes.

"I love autumn, really. I'd just want to eat these leaves." P4

"Could it be, here also, the proximity of water that attracts us? Maybe it's the Tove Jansson's legacy living in us, so two women and the sea. Except it is a lake." P2

When asked what makes these places meaningful or why did the participants feel the sense of belonging in the place or close to the elements (trees, lake), meanings varied.

Many reasoned the importance of nature with being able to be themselves, without being looked at and thus being safe and able to enjoy the tranquility. One place like this was Sorsapuisto park and the Sorsalammi pond in it, in Tulli, Tampere (Figure 1).

"It's that there you can really breath and you can, for a while, be quiet with your thoughts. Even though the thoughts whizzed terribly, but it is like, it is so calming. And then the fact that you are not being observed by others all the time or, or that you can be there really in peace." P5

"It is just good to be in the forest and you have this calming feeling and safe feeling. And there it is just so good to, like, just think about things [...] and ponder." P4



Figure 2. A picture of the tranquil view to Sorsalammi pond in Sorsapuisto park

A few also drew links between nature and their childhood. It seemed as being close to nature brought that homey feeling, being safe and expressing oneself freely (Figure 2).

"--- [Being in the forest] brings memories of childhood and memories of home. – Piles of leaves always remind be of childhood and --, middle school and foraging in the forest." P4

"I think it is that we both are, both are like from the sea. So then here, like the only good body of water that there is, is the lake –" P2



Figure 3. A picture of a participant being playful in a park

Many appreciated the proximity of a park to their house, and explained how the presence of other people, especially young people or people from the university, could create the feeling of safety as well. The parks were overall seen as quite safe for queer folks. Some felt that the actual forests were too far and viewed that as unfortunate.

“Nature has a lot of meaning, like, well, generally all the parks and, or when you get to go somewhere --. I’ve tried to, in Tampere, to look for, quite much already, where you would actually feel that you are in a forest --. Well, Pyynikki is lovely but there it doesn’t always, well that I can hear the sounds of cars and like that, but still, like well, I don’t know. Well nature and parks are really important.” P4

“Then there isn’t, when you live in quite the center of the city ---, there really isn’t forests like that you could just visit, not very close.” P1

“I think with Sorsapuisto, another good thing is that it is so close to the university. --- but I feel like the presence of civilization makes it a safe space for queer people.” P2

“It seems to me that is somehow less threatening to be a queer woman here in this park than, for example, somewhere in Hämeenkatu, it is kind of easier, or that here there isn’t as many of those people who could potentially be threatening.” P1

Within this theme, the places that especially arose in the conversation were Sorsapuisto park and the Sorsalammi pond in it, Koskipuisto park, Tammerkoski rapids (many mentioned the smaller bridge over the rapids to be the most beautiful spot in Tampere), Pyynikki nature reserve and Makkarajärvi lake and forests in Hervanta. People also noticed and appreciated some smaller natural elements in the city view as trees, piles of leaves, smaller parks and passageways with flora. Many explained these being important for as to see the seasons change.

Through the analysis, the elements of this theme could be seen as removing the need for competencies to belong. As Allen et al. (2021) explained competencies to belong being the skills to connect to a place, in a haven of tranquility, such as a park, participants could be themselves, and as themselves feel free to connect to the place. This suggests that in that given place, the need to acquire a certain set of skills in order to belong was diminished.

4.2 Symbols of inclusion

Maybe the most obvious of the themes within this context, are the direct symbols of inclusion or exclusion. Most self-explanatory symbols that made the participants feel a sense of belonging, either to a place or to the city of Tampere in general, were rainbow flags and welcoming tags or stickers. A few participants mentioned how seeing a pride flag in the window of the coffee shop made them instantly feel welcoming and belonging to that place. Seeing symbols like that evoked the thought of “there are others like me there”.

“— [T]hat restaurant has a rainbow flag visible to outside. So, so that makes it somehow feel very welcoming and, like, if there is something like that, a rainbow flag or something, it makes you feel like that everybody is welcome there and you can be whoever and be, like, however. – It makes you feel like, okay, this is safe – and you don't need to portray in any way or to be really on guard, but it can be that the people in that place might have a unifying factor.” P4

Vice versa, exclusion was noted, and participants said that it made them immediately feel cold and unwelcomed. This division of inclusion and exclusion did not only limit to the inclusive or exclusive remarks pointed to sexual minorities, but many felt that it extended to other minorities as well. It was seen as of taking care of other subordinate groups and defending those who were in a worse situation than oneself. Many thought that if one minority is not accepted within the city borders why would other, queer people, be?

“If I see for example some stickers, like on a lamp-post or something, or something where there is something hostile, it immediately reminds you that, oh yeah, there are assholes like these roaming around the city as well. But then again if I see something, I don't know, something cute or a positive message or some [inclusive] symbols --- yeah, it really matters--.” P4

“[Seeing exclusive stickers] makes me angry and makes me feel sad, -- it breaks up the bubble you live in.” P3

The symbols of inclusion could also be more subtle: posters of events for people of the LGBTQ community or other happenings that just “seemed gay” by, again, standing out from the mass and from what is accepted by norms (as in burlesque dancing or dildo

bingo) and advertisement showing diversity. Many places were also known for being very welcoming towards queer people and other minorities, and whether it was word-of-mouth or own experience, people described belonging.

“Ok, this is Unisex. I haven’t been there but they host dildo bingo.” P3

“Unisex has a dildo bingo?!” P4

“Yeah, they host it in Kajakka.” P3

Participants also expressed their feelings towards the city to act regarding this. By allowing exclusive and hostile stickers, the city allows these attitudes. Most of the participants wished that the city would take more of a stance in this and this could be implemented as stickers around the city. There were discussion whether that would work in reality, or not and could it make people even more prejudiced.

“Well, I would say that if there were, for example, some, I don’t know, message boards that if you encounter any kind of harassment or something like that, contact this number ---. And respect other people’s own space, or something like that, because these things should be self-evident.” P4

“Yeah, but then again, I feel that these kinds of people, who are that stupid, I don’t know. Well, no text or anything like that is going to change them.” P3

Some of the participants also noted endeavors the city had already done in effort to make the city a more inclusive place in context of urban areas and LGBTQ rights. These notions were mainly of the Tampere Pride and some visible signs during the Pride Week.

“And this was so lovely during Pride Week, when they put up the rainbow lighting there. Yeah, the whole of the Hämeenkatu, or that part, looked so nice.” P4

This theme of symbols of inclusion, including clear evidence of an inclusive environment, such as accepting and welcoming tags or stickers, made a clear difference in the perception of an individuals belonging. The clues of like-minded people existing in the city made the participants to think that this is a place, or this is a city that they belong to and to which they are accepted. Not only that, but it increased the motivation to belong – this is a place or a city they want to belong in. Most importantly, and the clearest sign of inclusion as well, the rainbow stickers or flags in a place, sent a message of opportunities to belong with the thought of “these are the places I am welcomed to”.

4.3 Displays of diversity

Already Florida (Florida, 2004) linked queer people together with creative people in his critiqued work of “Cities and The Creative Class”. In this study, the view that queer people are often creative as well, and appreciative of art and beauty, persisted. The third theme, displays of diversity, is indicating to the elements in urban context that somehow stand

out as divergent from the general mass. This varied from architecture and arts to clues of communal living or community and culture.

"It is such a small thing that makes you happy. Like seeing something pretty, it is odd how much it can affect you." P5

All the participants viewed beautiful art and architecture as important, and vice versa, grey and boring architecture was mainly viewed negatively. The beauty of a piece is, of course, quite of a subjective experience, but architecture showing history kept emerging in the interviews. Each of the participants either mentioned and thought fondly of the industrial red-brick buildings or older wooden houses. The participants appreciated how the history of the city is visible and that one can see both the young and the old living side by side in the city (Figure 3).

"It is somehow so lovely that [at Finlayson] there the old times and the history of Finlayson are visible and, like that, unknowingly you get information of an area-- . Maybe because, Tampere is a working-class city, or it was, so this red-brick is something that I love so much. " P5

"Churches are great buildings --- and it has an interesting history --- and I don't know it has all these funny details, so if there would be an apartment building instead, it wouldn't be the same at all, there is a certain atmosphere here." P4



Figure 4. A picture of a red-brick building which was an example of showing young and old side by side

Art was, in most of the cases, interpreted positively, regardless of what it presented (Figure 5). Only tags or art invoking fearful emotions were seen as not giving to the environment. Otherwise, art in the urban areas was seen as the city sending a message that people in the city can express themselves freely and different groups of people are accepted.

"It makes me happy. It like, and the same with these, uhm, paintings and others-" P1

"Murals." P2

"Yeah, in my opinion, they kind of liven up the city view and make it look like what the city itself is and what the people are like --. In any case, among other things, it makes the city seem adaptive in a way and that there are many kinds of people here--." P1



Figure 5. A picture of a distinct art piece, a mural

Many drew direct links between being artistic and being gay.

"All artistry and such, that one stands out or does something that is individual or artistic or something like that, if there's a lot of cool art --- all that make me feel good and safe. So, yeah, in short, probably something like personality." P3

These elements of one's self-expression were broadened to communal spaces and spaces establishing culture. These places, such as the Tampere Theatre (Figure 5) and Tampere Central Square, shared the same narrative of letting people be themselves and express themselves freely in the city.

"--- The Tampere Theatre is not maybe the best example, but it is, like, like here nearby. So that, art is like, especially such as like this, performing arts, --- it has created the sense of community to us." P1

"But [Tampere Central Square] is like a tabula rasa, so that it is a boring, plain platform that you can swat almost anything on it and it kind of depends on the community what will become of it." P2

“Yes, these kinds of spaces strongly enable different kinds of activities and, kind of, the mobility of the community, for example, that there are places like [Tampere Central Square] where it goes from the summer terrace to Christmas Market, to demonstrations and various other events, so yes, --- it enables that those spaces can be used by many people.” P1

“--- I have enjoyed a lot, for example, that the Summer Terrace has been put up on there, Tampere Central Square, and there people could have gathered together.” P5

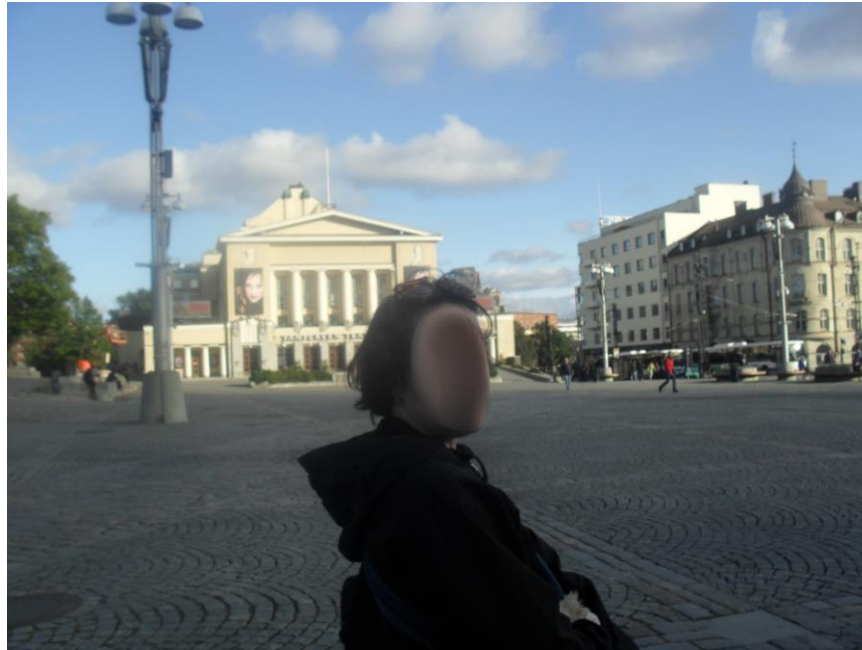


Figure 6. *Picture taken by a participant of another in front of the Tampere Theatre, in the Tampere Central Square*

Though, this feeling of “tabula rasa” was not seen solely as good or progressive. The positively viewed communality of the space also allowed gathering for people who were seen as threatening for queer people, as intoxicated people for example.

“[At the Tampere Central Square] there was the summer market, or what it was, ---, but it was a bit too, weird. I mean if there is a place where ice hockey is played from a big screen, it is not the side you can find us from.” P1

“There was also this stand of the Finns Party. --- in a way it feels like that our shared space is used to support fascism and racism.” P1

“Or an initiative that would prevent us from being here.” P2

In addition to arts and architectural choices, participants noted other visible elements in the urban environment, that stood out from the general city view. These were such as colourful benches, funky shapes in pavement or flower pots and crocheted scarves for trees – elements which the city allowed or enforced to be there that represented the diversity of the city and its residents.

“[I]f you see something, well something like that, crocheted handcraft and flower pots, it makes you feel like, ok, that here people can clearly, kind of, express themselves and

make art and it can be visible in the city view and then it makes you feel that you can, like, be and be seen.” P4

In the work of Allen et al. (2021), motivations to belong was defined as the inner drive of an individual to belong. This theme, displays of diversity, showcases the opportunities of a city to enhance this type of belonging of an individual. By seeing divergent architecture, varying art and other forms of self-expression in the urban environment, the participants of this study found that this is a city of diversity and hence, comfort, to them.

4.4 Clues of sustainability

The last theme that prevalently emerged from the interviews was sustainable values, specifically veganism and buying used garments. Many related sustainable values and being queer together, whether they were describing themselves or “the lesbian”, as one participant clearly expressed with some irony in her tone:

“Well, the queer identity, the saving of the world and recycling are absolutely part of it, and it isn’t always doable here in Tampere, so, well, a shame.” P3

Many mentioned thrift stores and flea markets, and thought that in addition to buying used, that was also a fashion choice for many and a way of self-expression. These were also places where like-minded people could be found.

“UFF! Or thrift shops in general. I feel that everytime I go there, or to any thrift store in Tampere, you always see people that are dressed like, well –” P4

“Queer-assumed.” P3

“Well, not necessarily, but many dress like, well, I don’t know, expressing themselves, and it makes you feel that, hey, I could be friends with anybody here. [...] There is just a good vibe there. It’s always nice to go there, isn’t it?” P4

“I stopped here, in front of Oldie, because, in my opinion, something that’s also common with queer-women [...]. Well, when you are a green leftist woman who cares about nature, and all that, then you dress second hand.” P2

Eating plant-based or vegan diet, was brought up by many of the participants. It was often recognised as a personal preference, but also seen as something that relates to the queer community as a whole.

“I see that, that in the queer community there is this kind of atmosphere or a perception that we are, or that the main thing is love and, like, acceptance. You can be whoever you want and happiness is the most important thing. [...] I think that, for example veganism, it’s got to do with, like, graciousness, that you don’t want to hurt anyone.” P4

The clues in an urban milieu of the support of environmental values as these, were seen as evoking safe and warm feelings. The presence of secondhand stores and plant-based

restaurants made the city seem progressive and hence, inclusive. As stated in the previous theme, similarly, this made the participants to want to belong, not only to the specific places as restaurants or thrift store, but to the city as well. On an individual level, the participants could, by finding these clues of sustainable values, find places that share a similar mindset, and thus find more opportunities to belong, in the forms of places, people and communities.

5. DISCUSSION AND PROPOSITIONS

The analysis of this thesis aimed to explain the impacts of urban environment in the sense of belonging of queer female student in Tampere. While a major part of the material collected were perceptions of the general inclusivity towards queer people and the feelings that “the lesbian” – the stereotype of a young queer woman – would feel of things, a lot could be interpreted behind these thoughts to understand the individuals’ subjective experiences. To acquire this, the method of IPA was noted very useful.

The analysis concluded in four distinct themes of the elements and places evoking the sense of belonging within the participants. After analysing the emerged themes through the integrative framework of belonging (Allen et al., 2021), a general understanding of the impacts of urban environment on queer female students could be acquired.

With the components of belonging (1. Competencies, 2. Opportunities, 3. Motivations and 4. Perceptions) the impacts could be defined as following:

1. Places for unwinding and free self-expression (havens of tranquility) allowed for a more lenient acquirement of competencies to belong. As the space or place was lacking observant eyes, one could present themselves in different ways – one could be themselves. This means that the places did not have a set of norms that one should follow or present themselves by.
2. Elements that hinted towards inclusion, equality, and sustainability (symbols of inclusion and clues of sustainability) gave an individual the impression that in the presence of these elements, they were accepted and welcomed, hence indicating the availability of the possibilities to belong – opportunities.
3. In the presence of visible elements of inclusion and diversity (symbols of inclusion and displays of diversity), the participants either felt a strong connection to the place or wanted to enhance this connection, or most often, both. The place -- in many cases, the city of Tampere, that displayed and represented a variety of diverse physical elements, was seen as a hub for a variety of diverse people. The distinct pieces of architecture and art, in essence, told the queer participants, that it is okay to stand out from the masses. The city allowing for these elements to be there, sent a message to the participants, that they are allowed as well. This made the participants feel wanted, and thus, the motivation to belong increased.
4. Each of the themes affected the perceptions of belonging among the participants. In some way. When encountering places during the interviews, people came

across feelings of being included or being excluded, or the future possibility of either. These perceptions of the inclusivity of a place had an impact on the perception of one's belonging. This perception of belonging also affected the other components – one that had a perception of exclusion, felt that they will be excluded in the future as well, thus lacking in motivation, and other who interpreted a place or the city as inclusive, had both a boost in self-confidence, thus increased competencies, and was more prepared to find places to belong to, thus increased opportunities.

When reading the results of this study, the nature of IPA needs to be kept in mind: the researcher interprets the perception of the interviewees, thus, in the end, it is the perception of the researcher that is presented (Ponto, 2017). Even though the researcher would take the most objective stand, when analysing the meanings behind another's words, one cannot be steered away of their own prejudice, stereotypes, ways of thinking as well as the impacts of social constructs. While offering the insights of this study and the phenomena, IPA also has its limitations.

What is depicted in this study, are the perception of a few, and this study cannot be generalized to the community, to queer women in Tampere or the age cohort of the studied group. Still, this study offers great insight to the study of queer belonging that can be used in motivating future study in the field of queer planning or as a review of Allen et al.'s framework of belonging.

The 2.3 shortly reviewed the planning policies in relation to queer people and other minorities and the general safety of Tampere. While the guidelines given in the plans reviewed could be seen as quite vague, the city, in my opinion, is on the right track. The efforts of this thesis hopefully highlight the distinct needs of queer women in Tampere. In the light of this study, I suggest the following three standpoints for the city of Tampere:

1. What is allowed in the city and who supervises this: By allowing stickers promoting exclusive ideologies, such as racism, homophobia, transphobia or gender inequality, the city allows these concepts within the city borders. These elements staying even for a day, on the city walls, trash bins and lampposts, can reach the attention of too many.
2. Who – and for what kind of motive – are allowed to use the communal spaces: The freedom of speech is a crucial piece of democracy, but the city has to think what is the message sent to the residents. By allowing demonstrations of minorities in effort to ensure equality and safety in the city, the city sends a message of acceptance. Vice versa, by allowing a demonstration with a motive emerging

from a place of hate or prejudice, the city sends a message that its residents and their worth can be evaluated by different characteristics.

3. Have fun. The participants craved for representation of diversity and this included funky architecture and art as well as clues of residents participating in the creation of urban environment. Every city could use more of citizen participation to create a city of the citizens.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Exploring queer female experiences, this study contributes to queer planning with studying the impact of urban environment to the sense of belonging. With thorough interpretive phenomenological analysis, crucial notions rose from the go-along interviews. The most noteworthy finding, and the most common narrative of the participants of the study, was that the city sends a message to queer folks, by allowing or not allowing certain elements within its borders.

The sense of belonging of queer female students in Tampere was studied, and developed in creation of sectioned themes that describe the places and elements impacting the sense of belonging. Shortly, the women of the study felt the natural elements offering peace, symbols in urban context offering inclusion, art and architecture depicting diversity and environmental values seen in the city view told a narrative of a loving community. These all impacted the competencies, opportunities, motivations and, mostly, perceptions of belonging among the participants. Elements showing inclusion and diversity tended to have positive impact on the components of belonging, as exclusive features of the city, arouse cold feelings and decreased the sense of belonging.

From the study, three propositions are drawn for the city of Tampere. I propose these in order to make the city more inclusive to the people of the LGBTQI+ community, but I do not want to diminish the possibility of making the city more attractive to the general public. First, the study addresses how allowing exclusive elements in the urban environment, allows for the persistence of exclusive attitudes. Second, the use of public and communal spaces should be restricted in ways that no human or their permission to exist is violated. And last, but not least, the study encourages the city to have fun and enjoy. If nothing else, do it for the gays.

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