The planning and building of a new residential community: A discourses survey

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The study introduces the results of a discourses survey mapping the media content and public views on the emergence of a residential community in a northern Finnish city. Three major discourses were seen to be at play in the process. The first of these highlighted communality and envisioned the area as a modern 'village community' where children were to be raised as active citizens. Secondly, the new school for the area was discursively constructed as serving not only this community but piloting new practices for the good of the whole city and even the country. The third discourse foregrounded dependencies between the new locality, the older neighbouring areas and the city centre. The analysis brought to light the diversity of actors and their voices in the long-term community planning process. The discourses survey highlighted the politicians' and citizens' viewpoints on the community planning and building process, showing the complexity of the process and its impact on the daily life of the citizens.

1 Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT) is merged with our everyday life having a central role in modern society. Our technology-rich environment affords different kinds of communities that may be characterised as connections and networks between people, which are more or less cohesive, changing and even virtual. Human relationships are essential in creating places – not just territorial or geographical boundaries and buildings. Technology developments and conceptions of place, as constituted through reiterative daily social practice, have an impact on urban planning, design, and architecture (Cresswell, 2004, p. 37; McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

The current study examines discourses circulating through the planning and building of a new technology-rich residential community, Ritaharju, in the middle-sized Finnish city of Oulu. The notion of discourse is here understood within the framework of mediated discourse theory, put into practice through

ethnography-oriented nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). Discourse is thus seen 'either as a form of action or a component of action – as a mediational means', as Al Zidjaly (2012) puts it, following Scollon (2001b). Discourse analysis for Scollon and Scollon (2004) means doing nexus analysis, which takes into account the historicity of discursive practices. Language and action are seen as mutually constitutive, language involving other semiotic, multimodal means as well (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). The term discourse may refer to language-in-use or, as a countable noun, to different multimodal semiotic systems of social practices ("big D" discourses) that people enact as members of different discourse communities, e.g., being a parent, teacher, heavy-metal fan or politician (Gee, 1992, 1999).

The rationale for the study arose from an interest to follow how a new multipurpose centre including a school was being designed and taken into use in Ritaharju: how the future users of the centre were involved in the planning and how pedagogic perspectives and the use of ICT were taken into account in the process. Oulu had been seen as one of the "living labs" of Europe, its residents experimenting with various new technologies on a community-wide scale (Saylor, 2012). Ritaharju was envisioned to become an exemplary technology-rich residential area and community in the city. In alignment with Finnish legislation that requires consultation with the citizens as an established practice in decision-making, the planning process was to be participatory (e.g., Administrative Procedure Act 434/2003).

The study is based on a discourses survey, one of the strategies of nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004), referring to the search for media content and public opinion (What's in the news?) to help the researcher ensure that s/he is working 'within cycles of discourse that are germane to an important issue as well as the crucial points at which mediated actions occur' (p. 156). The focus is on the discourses circulating through the planning and building of Ritaharju in the years 2005–2010, before the multipurpose centre was finally opened. Special attention is directed to how the development of Ritaharju area and its multipurpose centre were discursively constructed in the media content and public opinion available online and how the building was being legitimised and contested by different participants through the discourses.

2 Community and citizenship in change

At the time when the plans for the residential area of Ritaharju and its multipurpose centre started to become more concrete, the notions of communities and participation had been appearing frequently in the public discussions concerning active citizenship and the needs for developing the future school (see Alanko, 2013; Bauman, 2008; Delanty, 2010). Earlier, modernisation narratives had foregrounded the decline of community (e.g., Evans, 2004, p. 2; Delanty, 2010, pp. 1–4). While the community is seen as the core of pre-modern society, the phenomena connected to modernisation such as the advancements of wage work and industrial cities and, later, the processes of individualisation, all imply a decline. Similar contemplations have been presented in the writings of almost all the classical sociologists – Ferdinand Tönnies in particular (1974).

The basic tenets of the concept of community refer to an organised society with people living in the same area. Those people are seen to share the same interests, identity and characteristics (Sichling, 2008, p. 108). Community has often been defined as a static locality characterised by the mutuality of social interaction,

seen as a basis for enduring common values and interaction among people living in that locality. For Paasi (2001), regions are social constructs created in political, economic, cultural and administrative practices and discourses (p. 16), i.e., constantly being shaped by people. Thinking about community development from the perspective of centre-periphery dynamics, Kelly-Holmes and Pietikäinen (2013) point out how periphery is mainly a relational, not a descriptive notion, becoming meaningful and accessible through its connection to the centre. In post-modernist discourses communities are seen as fluid and fragile, often virtual groupings surrounded by the "insecure world" (Bauman, 2008).

The ideas of community often involve the notion of active citizenship. Delanty (2010) sees citizenship to be a combination of rights, duty, participation and identity (p. 4). Banks (2004) regards even the day-to-day interaction of human beings as constitutive of part of citizenship. Hracs and Massam (2008) suggest that physical and virtual sites should complement each other in civic engagement. New forms of placeless communities (e.g., Chayko, 2002, 2008; Ling, 2008) created by the digital revolution have changed the means and possibilities of citizens' participation, as the new channels of communication with increasing interactivity facilitate citizen participation on more than a local level, reaching a European (Enjolras, 2009) or even a global level. Castells (2004) has perhaps been the most prominent advocate of the emergence of a network society. New technology-rich communities can in the vein of Kopomaa (2002) and Bajwa (2007) be described as neo-communities, or e-neighbourhoods (Hampton, 2007).

The discussion on bringing about new connections between the individual and the community has provided resources for creating new models for citizen participation. Van der Veen (2001) distinguishes between two perspectives on participation: a system and a life-world perspective. From a system perspective it is important to encourage all citizen groups to have an active input in society, not only in planning processes but also in development policies and politics. Such participation models are system-controlled, leaving aside the informal networks that are part of people's mundane life-world. From a life-world perspective, any kind of collective interest can form a basis for participation (Van der Veen, 2001), and limits to participation are set mainly by the capacity and connections of the groups involved (Stroobants et al., 2001). All in all, the core of active citizenship lies in citizens' participation in discussions and decision-making on the issues that concern their life-world. However, citizens' participation in practice is still complicated both by planning practices and by people's own inclination to participate (see e.g., Innes & Booher, 2007).

One of the main goals of urban planning and architecture in the blueprint planning era (Mäntysalo et al., 2015) was to enhance social life in the area or block of buildings being planned. Earlier planning theories saw physical structures as having a vital importance in building socially functional living communities (see e.g., Harvey, 1973). Such a view was subsequently criticised as physical determinism (see e.g., Michelson, 1970). Today, planners and architects also have other means to engender social life. One such means is to advance social relations and cohesion and thus also communal life and participation by developing the information technology infrastructure in the areas being planned. Considering the planning and building of Ritaharju residential area and the multipurpose centre, such an emphasis characterised strategic planning (Mäntysalo et al., 2015) with the aim of enhancing participation in the area. However, despite the emphasis on enhancing the participation of various actors in communal information-infrastructure-building projects, previous research has also revealed the inertia of

the existing foundation, installed base, manifest in inherent power-related aspects, which limits participation, e.g., the distribution of decision-making power and positioning of new actors in predetermined roles (Halkola et al., 2015).

This study bears resemblance to research on linguistic landscapes which sees language and other semiotic means, their placement in time and space, as well as human relationships as contributing to the discursive construction of space (see Shohamy 2012; Shohamy & Waksman, 2009). Studies following the ecological perspective focus on the complex relationships between the contributing actors and objects among others (e.g., Shohamy 2010; Hult 2009; Pietikäinen et al. 2011; Pietikäinen 2014). For example, Pietikäinen et al. (2011) studied the situation of changing multilingualism and endangered languages in some villages in the Northern Calotte area through signs as frozen action (Norris, 2004), i.e., as material manifestations of actions taken in the past. The (re)construction of different (language) ideologies and ideologies of nationalism has been studied in Hungary with respect to visual arrangements in public spaces (Szabó, 2015). Hult (2009) combined the study of linguistic landscape with nexus analysis, as did Pietikäinen et al. (2011), exploring multilingualism and language policy in the streets of a Swedish city. Shohamy's (2010) study shed light on how various types of linguistic landscape in public spaces were employed by the municipality of Tel Aviv to convey a redefinition of the city in preparation for its centennial celebrations. This study will explore how the residential community of Ritaharju and its multipurpose centre were discursively constructed when still in the process of planning and building.

3 Research design

3.1 Background: The preliminaries of the emerging Ritaharju

In 2014, there were ca 196 000 inhabitants in the region of the city of Oulu, the context of the study (Appendix, City of Oulu, 2014a). The City is well known for its high-tech industry and is one of the Intelligent Communities of the world. It advertises itself as the *Capital of Northern Scandinavia, building the future* (Appendix, City of Oulu, 2014b, pp. 5–6, 7). The themes in its *master plan* include *bold uses of technology to help people in their daily routines* and characterise the City as a *diverse community and environment* (Appendix, Spirit of the New North: Oulu in 2025, 2012, p. 12).

The new housing area appears as an important development area both for living as well as for commercial use in the city plans of the years 2004 and 2005. The closeness of Ritaharju both to the campus of the University of Oulu and Technopolis, a cluster of technology companies, gives the area a distinct character. As late as 2005, the district was practically uninhabited. Five years later there were 2709 residents, mostly young couples with children. The share of the youngest age group (0–6 years) was three times greater and the next age group two times greater than in the City in general; 39.3 per cent in total were twelve years old or younger (Appendix, City of Oulu, 2013, pp. 24–26).

To address the expected large number of young families and their children, planning for Ritaharju multipurpose centre was started in 2004. The centre was to include day care, pre-school and school facilities for 7–16-year-olds, a library, a cafeteria, and facilities for the young and other residents of the area. Building the

multipurpose centre became a large-scale development project, entailing new pedagogical approaches, architecture and interior design as well as new ICT solutions. The public documents of the City emphasized the involvement of school children in order to cater to their needs and competencies. A pedagogical working group for school development was established in 2004. An architectural competition was held between December 2005 and June 2007. The City joined the international School of the Future Program, starting in January 2007. The head of the centre was selected in October 2008, other personnel in December 2008 and March 2010. The teaching and action plans were created in April 2009; the research group co-arranged a student research project in autumn 2009 with the head of the centre to study the residents' expectations and ideas concerning possible uses of the centre and the school, also with respect to ICT. The centre was opened in autumn 2010. The commercial area serving Ritaharju residents came into use in 2011.

3.2 Discourses survey

A discourses survey, a procedure within ethnographically inspired nexus analysis, can be conducted when a researcher wishes to engage with the field, looking for interesting issues to examine more closely. It can be done by collecting newspapers and magazines, visiting websites, and watching television news broadcasts. 'While "hot" issues tend to change rapidly in these media, a careful analysis can show which issues continually return for attention' (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, pp. 156–157).

Scollon and Scollon (2004) draw on a conception of discourse that applies Gee's (1992, 1999) notion of "little d" discourse and "big D" discourses, which they prefer to use without capitalisation. The former, a mass noun, refers to language in use, how language is used *in situ* to enact activities and identities, and the latter, countable, to systems of language use and other meaning-making practices that form ways of talking about social reality (Gee, 1990, p. 26; Fairclough, 1992). Scollon and Scollon (2004) further refer to Blommaert (2005, p. 3) in expanding their view of d/Discourse as involving 'all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural and historical patterns and developments of use.' As discourse analysis is according to Scollon and Scollon (2004, p. 7) used to engage in social action, they characterise it as nexus analysis. Pietikäinen (2015) suggests that nexus analysis provides a perspective on discourses as rhizomatic (see Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), open systems that emerge and transform in the course of interaction (p. 210; see also Honan, 2004).

In short, nexus analysis views discourses as 'whole systems of the possibility of producing meanings, with or without language' (Scollon, 2001a; Gee, 1999; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). They are thus mediated importantly through verbal or written language but also through diverse other, multimodal semiotic means (see Scollon & Scollon, 2003, 2004). In ensemble, they contribute to creating a particular rhetoric foregrounding certain "discourses in place" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). It is different actors that bring along their values, histories and accustomed practices, i.e., "historical bodies" as termed by Scollon and Scollon (2004, pp. 13, 102; orig. Nishida, 1958). Social action and practices emerge from reciprocal interactional relationships and arrangements, i.e., "interaction order", between people (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 13; orig. Goffman, 1971). Discourse is seen as a form of social action that is ideological, historical and socially situated, constituting society and culture (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Scollon, 2001). Nexus analysis focuses on social actions, situated in time and place but also bound in

their historical trajectories across multiple timescales (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 156). The complex configurations between the different participants in the process become visible in the media through anticipatory discourse orienting towards future events, actions or states (de Saint-Georges, 2005, 2013).

3.3 Data and research process

This study is based on a discourses survey that was conducted to examine the emergence of the Ritaharju community in public citizen forums and the media. A range of participants were contributing to this process: City planners, local education authorities, journalists, and local inhabitants to mention a few. Texts were collected in order to see which topics and issues surrounding Ritaharju and its multipurpose centre were repeatedly returning to the foreground.

   The texts were available either online or in paper format, published 2005–2010 in local and national newspapers as well as magazines and blogs. Discussions were also followed on the websites of Ritaharju school and the local residents' association and forums connected with online news sites. General information was available through the City portal, project pages, and the websites of the city schools as well. Diverse official documentation was retrieved on decision-making in the City bodies from the minutes of the educational board and land use plans.

   The criterion for selecting the texts was their connectedness to the new Ritaharju residential area. The data consist of 40 newspaper articles, 25 documents related to the planning process and the city of Oulu, and 12 other reports. The texts were imported as internal sources to QSR NVivo (a platform for qualitative analysis). In addition, some external sources such as papers published by the planning agencies and more extensive reports funded by the City were included in the data.

   As Pietikäinen (2012) points out, reaching the logic and materialisation of discourses in the data is the result of the process of analysis, i.e., an integrated process of making sense of data and theoretical reflection. After the data collection, all the authors familiarised themselves with the texts independently, trying to understand what kinds of discourses seemed to be central (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, pp. 156–157). This involved looking at who the participants were, and what was being done through the discourses. The authors drew on their disciplinary perspectives, i.e., sociology, linguistics, pedagogy, and technology use, and in data workshops elaborated their shared understandings about the most germane discourses at play in the emergence of Ritaharju, i.e., communality discourse, future school discourse and dependency discourse. The defining of the most relevant discourses was based on this collaborative interpretative work, drawing on the occurrences of topics in the data and theoretical insight from nexus analysis.

4 The discursive construction of the technology-rich neo-community of Ritaharju

4.1 Ritaharju as a modern village community

The first discourse that was seen to be prevalent in the media and public forums pictured the future residential neighbourhood of Ritaharju as a modern 'village community'. Hence, it was labelled as "communality discourse": Ritaharju would become a good neighbourhood for its new residents, who were styled as active

citizens willing to take part in the decision-making concerning their own residential area. Participation, the essential aspect of active citizenship, was foregrounded in the discussions about the school, the multipurpose centre, and the planning process in general. In the 'inclusion manual' which the Ministry of Education and Culture, together with four cities, including Oulu, had published for teachers, participation was pondered from children's and young people's point of view, assigning the responsibility for their engagement to adults[1]:

(1)

> Ei riitä, että laki velvoittaa. Meidän aikuisten on löydettävä vielä syvempiä perusteita, mikäli haluamme, että lasten ja nuorten osallisuus toteutuisi myös käytännössä.

> It is not enough that the law obliges. We adults must find even firmer grounds if we wish that the participation of children and young people is to be also realized in practice. (Tervonen, 2009)

The manual was a product of a training project for teachers and other professionals in the educational field. The voices of the participants were aired through a teacher educator acting as the author of the manual (Appendix, Tervonen, 2009). As the example above illustrates, the ideal of communality was constructed by positioning citizens in a central role in promoting (*We adults must*) children's and young people's active engagement in community activities instead of assuming that societal sanctions (*the law obliges*) will automatically ensure genuine participation (Halkola et al., 2015). In the same vein, the inclusion of a broader range of actors was portrayed as essential, as a quote from a statement of the city advisory board for the strategy and action programme stressed:

(2)

> Lasten ja nuorten osallisuus on osa nuorisotoimen strategiaa ja painopiste-alueita. Oulun kaupungissa on luotu nuorisotoimen ja opetustoimen yhteistyönä nuorisovaikuttamisen malli, jolla edistetään lasten ja nuorten osallistumista ja lisätään heidän vaikuttamis-mahdollisuuksiaan. Kaikki Oulun kaupungin suuralueet ovat mukana toiminnassa. Alueelliset nuorten vaikuttajaryhmät (11 kpl) on valmennettu yhteistyössä opetustoimen kanssa. Jokaisessa perusopetuksen yksikössä on toiminnassa mukana yhdysopettaja, joka huolehtii koulun osuudesta toiminnasta. Alueryhmien toimintaa tukee ja valmentaa alueen nuorisotyöntekijä.

> The engagement of children and the young is part of the strategy and among the foci of the administrative sector for youth services. In Oulu city a model of youth participation has been created in collaboration between the youth and the educational sector to advance children's and young people's participation and strengthen their opportunities for having a say in society. All the administrative districts of the city are involved in the action. The youth action groups from the districts (11) have been trained in collaboration with the educational sector. In every unit of basic education there is a contact teacher involved in taking care of the school's part in the activities. The activities of the district groups are supported and coached by the youth worker of the area. (Lausunto, 2010)

Reflecting the new forms of governance practices implying multi-actor governance (Stewart, 2005) and participation (e.g., Balducci & Calvarese, 2005), a configuration of contributors was named in the example (e.g., *All the administrative districts*, *youth action groups*, *a contact teacher*, *the youth worker of the area*). The communality aspect was further foregrounded through expressions suggesting agency and its facilitation

among the participants (e.g., *engagement*, *collaboration*, *strengthen the opportunities*, *having a say*, *involved*, *supported* and *coached*).

Community-building was, indeed, a dominant topic in the discourse related to the planning of Ritaharju and especially the multipurpose centre with its novel information technology solutions. The collective historical body (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) visible in Finland still implies an idealised view of the rural way of life and rural communities, as the City guide for basic education, targeting parents of schoolchildren, shows:

(3)

[…] monitoimitalo on "Tulevaisuuden kyläyhteisö", jossa innostus ja ilo, toisten arvostaminen, turvallisuus sekä yhdessä tekeminen ovat toiminnan arvolähtökohtia.

[…] the multipurpose centre is the "Village community of the future" where enthusiasm and joy, appreciation of others, safety and collaboration belong to the value basis of the activities. (Oulussa koulussa, 2010)

In the *village community of the future* (see above), children are envisioned to become community members in the social contexts of everyday life and attempts are made to reach the ideal (Delanty, 2010). In the data of the study, participation in all forms of activities in the neighbourhood was presented as fostering children's growth towards active citizenship, and valuing other people's perspectives. This can be further evidenced reflected in the ideal of a close-knit society where children are raised by all the people of the village.

The communality discourse was further strengthened through the City's strategy and action plan for citizen participation. It was highlighted how the practices in the multipurpose centre were designed to break the prevalent interaction order (Scollon & Scollon, 2004), promoting collaboration for equal citizenship:

(4)

[…] osallistumismahdollisuuksien takaaminen ja laajentaminen. Lasten ja nuorten osallisuudessa tulee korostaa erityisesti vastuulliseksi ympäristökansalaiseksi kasvamista. Myös eri-ikäisten ihmisten välistä yhteisöllisyyttä tulee rakentaa yhdessä tekemisen keinoin.

[…] ensuring and expanding opportunities for participation. In the case of children's and young people's engagement their growth into responsible, environmentally aware citizens must be highlighted. Also communality between people of different ages must be built through collaborative means. (Lausunto, 2010)

The communality aspect was foregrounded by pointing out the need for reducing generation gaps and communication barriers between people (*ensuring and expanding opportunities for participation, communality between people of different ages*). With all its functions in addition to the school, the centre was envisioned to be the heart of the community, manifesting its possibilities of becoming the centre of social activities for inhabitants of all ages. The strong incentive to advance the community aspects in Ritaharju was foregrounded in a local newspaper with the head of the multipurpose centre characterising the centre as the *first of its kind in Finland* (*ensimmäinen laatuaan Suomessa*). The importance of city officials dissolving *administrative barriers* (*hallinnollisia raja-aitoja*) was also brought forward in the local newspaper, the journalist mediating the voice of the head of the multipurpose centre:

(5)

> Yhteistyössä mennään Ritaharjussa askel pitemmälle. Jo suunnitteluvaiheessa yhteistyössä on keskusteltu kaikesta ja haettu yhteistä hallintomallia.
>
> In Ritaharju, collaboration is taken a step further. As early as in the planning phase everything has been discussed in collaboration and a shared administrative model has been searched for. (Sankala, 2009)

The voices of other participants were also expressed in a report summarising the results of a collaboration project between the university and the multipurpose centre. The aim set for the project was to *support communality in the area* through ICT (example 6). The possibilities and expectations concerning technology use in the new multipurpose centre were explored among Ritaharju residents – adults and children. The researchers depicted their take on community building (examples 6–7):

(6)

> Asukkaiden toiveiden ja ideoiden keräämisen lisäksi projektin päämääränä oli kehitellä teknologisia konsepti-ideoita, jotka voisivat tukea alueen yhteisöllisyyttä ja monitoimikeskuksen toimivuutta. Kaikista vahvimmin esille nousi tarve yhteiselle online-järjestelmälle, joka sisältäisi kaikki asukkaiden ja yhteisön kannalta tärkeät toiminnot.
>
> Besides gathering the wishes and ideas of the inhabitants the project aimed at developing technological concepts that could support communality in the area and the functionalities of the multipurpose centre. What was highlighted most was the need for a shared online system, including all the functions important for the inhabitants and the community. (Mathlein et al., 2010)

(7)

> Pelkkä online-järjestelmä ei yksistään luo yhteisöllisyyttä, mutta se on vahva tukimekanismi asuinalueen yhteisöllisyyden kehittymiselle.
>
> A mere online system will not alone create communality but it is a strong support mechanism for the development of communality in the residential area. (Mathlein et al., 2010)

The collaboration project produced a concept for an online service for the residential area, its goal being to share information between community members (example 6). The service was seen as one of the methods of supporting community spirit, not the sole ICT solution (example 7). Even though the extracts above do not highlight the idea of community as based on virtual connections only, the possibilities for community building afforded by new ICT solutions (*a strong support mechanism*) were often mentioned in the data of the current study in relation to the planning and designing of the multipurpose centre and the school. Nevertheless, communality as emerging through face-to-face contacts between inhabitants was also emphasised in the public writings. In some statements, the multipurpose centre was boldly characterised as a place for a new kind of urban communality. Some went even further back into the ideas of pre-modern societies, calling Ritaharju a *village community of the future*, which in Wellman's (1979) and Delanty's (2010) terms refers to 'community as [a] recoverable' entity (p. 11). The actors contributing to the communality discourse portrayed the old village community as a model for the Ritaharju community. This view entails the seemingly paradoxical aim of creating something new and recovering something old at the same time; the old forms of communities are romanticized in the context

of forming a brand new, at least partly virtual, community. Using Delanty's (2010) conception, the spirit of old rural communities is recovered but now in connection with ubiquitous information and communication technology (p. 11).

4.2 The future school – the crown jewel of the City

The residential community of Ritaharju was also being constructed by central actors promoting the so-called future school project. This "future school discourse" highlighted the school in the new multipurpose centre as the jewel of the City, and as also serving the whole community more broadly. In this discourse, novel aspects of pedagogy, technology and design were introduced as providing fruitful affordances for pupils to engage in active learning in an open and supportive environment without the constraints of a gated classroom and traditional models of teaching. At the time of the discourses survey, the centre was still under construction and the school only envisioned in anticipatory talk. Figure 1 illustrates the architect's view of the multipurpose centre in the planning phase. The picture echoes the voices of the time, highlighting the centre as a meeting point for users of different types and ages.

Figure 1. Ritaharju multipurpose centre in the planning phase (image: Tietoa Finland Ltd/H. Jaakkola Architects Ltd).

Engaging in the future school discourse, pedagogic developers, city planning officers in the educational field as well as teachers active in the project were legitimising the existence of Ritaharju multipurpose centre and school, especially by emphasising active citizenship and community values. The goal was to develop a new kind of pedagogical thinking drawing on technological innovation. In a bulletin of the national teachers' union, Ritaharju school was envisioned by a programme representative, a City planning officer for educational affairs (example 8), as becoming a model example (*crown jewel*) for all the other schools in the district. Experiences and examples gained from the school were to be used to develop an educational concept that could be used for improving other schools, both nationally and internationally:

(8)

> Ritaharjusta, jota Miettunen nimittää kruununjalokiveksi, ei tehdä eliittikoulua tai ulkopuolisten ulottumattomissa olevaa ihmettelyn aihetta, akvaariokoulua. Siitä aikanaan kertyviä kokemuksia käytetään Oulun kaikkien oppilaitosten hyväksi.
>
> Ritaharju, which Miettunen calls the crown jewel, will not be an elite school or an unreachable aquarium school for outsiders to gaze at from a distance. In due time the experiences gathered there will be used for the benefit of all the educational institutions in Oulu. (Komulainen, 2009)

Potential critical voices were pre-empted by dissociating the *crown jewel* from schools for the select *elite* and the few Finnish *aquarium* schools that have a special status in trying out new curricula. The future school of Ritaharju was portrayed as being accessible to all citizens, who would not be *outsiders* viewing the school from *a distance*. The future school was thus presented as promoting equality among schools, anticipating the arguments claiming that the City might be favouring one school at the expense of the survival of other schools. The position of the new school as a target for special support was justified by emphasizing the dissemination of best practices across the educational network more widely. A rationale for the need for such a model was being constructed in 2007, in the initiative of the city Future School Program, by appealing to the changing pedagogic scenery, hinting at the prevailing mismatch between ideals and practice in the field:

(9)

> Keskiössä ovat 2000-luvun koulun oppilaat ja oppilailta vaadittavat valmiudet oppia, taidot ja tiedot. Oppiminen on muuttunut, oppijat ovat muuttuneet ja molempien on vastattava tulevaisuuden asettamiin vaatimuksiin. Oppimisympäristöjen on kehityttävä vastaamaan tätä kuvaa ja tämän on näyttävä konkreettisesti tulevaisuuden oppimisessa, luokkahuoneessa ja käytettävissä oppimisympäristöissä.
>
> It is the pupils of the 21st century and the competences required for learning, skills and knowledge that are in focus. Learning has changed, learners have changed, and both have to meet the challenges of the future. Learning environments have to develop to match this picture and this has to be concretely visible in the learning, the classroom and the learning environment in use in future. (City of Oulu, 2007)

The need for change was foregrounded throughout the data by highlighting the challenges of the future, which the education of the citizens would have to meet (e.g., *competences required*, *Learning has changed, Learning environments have to develop*). As example 10 below illustrates, in the description of Ritaharju school in the City guide for basic education, directed at the parents of the children who would be studying in the school, the emergence of a new kind of collaborative community culture between professionals and stakeholders was depicted as nurturing a fruitful environment for learning:

(10)

> Ritaharjun monitoimitalon yhteyteen valmistuu vertaansa vailla oleva oppimisympäristö, missä toiminnallisuus, tulevaisuuden oppimisen ja opettamisen rakenteet, menetelmät ja työkalut varmistavat hyvät valmiudet elämää varten. Eri ammattiryhmien osaamisen varmistaminen ja hyödyntäminen, yhdessä tekeminen, mahdollistavat lapsen ja nuoren kokonaisvaltaisen kohtaamisen ja hänen kasvun ja kehityksen tukemisen.

In connection with Ritaharju multipurpose centre a unique learning environment will emerge where the functionalities, structures, methods and tools for future learning and teaching will ensure good life resources. Ensuring and making use of the expertise of different professionals and collaboration will allow engagement with the child and the adolescent and support their growth and development comprehensively. (Oulussa koulussa, 2010)

The emerging learning environment was envisioned as *unique* and providing *good life resources*. Multiprofessional collaboration was also proposed as affording fruitful circumstances for development (*ensuring and making use of the expertise of different professionals*). A further rationale for the provision of a technology-rich multipurpose centre as the environment for the future school was proposed through voices highlighting the changing conceptions of learning (see extract 9 above).

The architect's wigwam-shaped design of the centre (figure 2) and other visualisations also appeared in various documentation available to the general public:
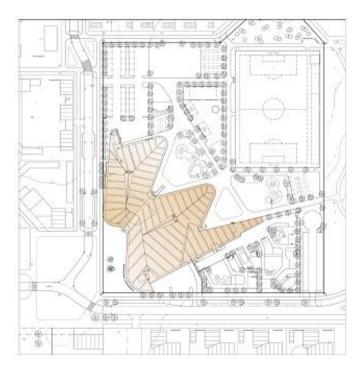

Figure 2. The design of the multipurpose centre (H. Jaakkola Architects Ltd).

The figure illustrates the design of the centre, which differs from the traditional design of public and especially school buildings, affording more flexible use of the space by multiple users and professionals. In the local newspaper the head of the multipurpose centre (acting also as the headmaster of the new school) also envisioned the sites of learning to expand beyond the school boundaries, which was seen to entail new kinds of boundary-crossing approaches with respect to the pupils' tuition in the community:

(11)

Oppilaat oppivat yhä enemmän koulun ulkopuolella. Ohjauksellisuuden lisääminen vapaa-ajalle teknologiaa hyväksi käyttäen lisää opetuksen ja oppimisen kokemista mielekkäänä ja nostaa motivaatiotasoa.

Pupils learn more and more outside the school. Increasing tuition in freetime with the help of technology will strengthen the positive experiences about teaching and learning, and raises the degree of motivation. (Kello ja Ritaharju kehittävät tulevaisuuden koulua, 2009)

The notion of Ritaharju multipurpose centre as an icon of the future school was being constructed in the data essentially in terms of its technological richness, but its impact was also seen to pervade the environment on a broader scale, having an important impact on wider pedagogic development, as discussed above. Technology development was seen by a Future School Program representative to essentially draw on a new kind of collaboration with business partners, which would entail changing practices in education. In other words, the school would be breaking with tradition by changing from an insular institution towards having active relationships with the wider community (example 12).

(12)

Täysin uutta on myös yritysten kanssa rakennettava strateginen kumppanuus. Sen myötä yritykset tuodaan mukaan koulun kehittämiseen. Suunnitteilla on mm. tuote-esittelyjä. Uudenlaisessa yhteistyössä yritysten kanssa on vielä paljon opeteltavaa, Jukka Miettunen ennakoi.

What is also something totally new is establishing strategic partnerships with companies. That engages companies in developing the school. Product demonstrations, among others, are being planned. There is still much to be learnt as regards new kinds of collaboration with companies, Jukka Miettunen envisions. (Komulainen, 2009)

In a professional magazine for teachers (example 13), the Future School Program representative presented Ritaharju multipurpose centre and school as continuing the successful technology development of the city (*marvel*), focusing on equality in supporting the whole range of schools in the area.

(13)

Ritaharjusta kaavaillaan eräänlaista jatkoa tälle (Oulun) ihmeelle. Koulussa on määrä hyödyntää tutkimusta ja teknologiaosaamista sekä kanssakäymistä yritysten kanssa – aivan uudella tavalla [..].

Ritaharju is envisaged to become a kind of continuation for this marvel. The school is meant to draw upon research and technology expertise as well as interaction with companies – in quite a new way [..]. (Komulainen, 2009)

It seemed to be of relevance also for the university-based High Tech Forum to report on this local news item (example 14), showing that the plans for the planned technology-rich Ritaharju school had raised the interest of local technology-related actors as well. The emphasis in the piece was put on the select smart schools being in a special position (*spearheads*) in comparison to the other (*regular*) schools:

(14)

Keihäänkärkinä toimivat kymmenen niin sanottua smart schoolia eli fiksua koulua, joilla on normaalikouluja suuremmat mahdollisuudet kokeilla esimerkiksi teknologisia ratkaisuja.

Ten so-called smart schools serve as spearheads, having better opportunities than regular schools to try out technological solutions, for example. (Ylönen, 2007; High Tech Forum, 2007)

Interestingly, the logic of this rationale was different compared to what the pedagogic professionals maintained (see above). For the educational actors it seemed to be important to highlight the innovation aspects of the development project as well but as providing benefits and good practices for the community, learning in general and the area more broadly. In the publication targeted at technology developers, rather than educational professionals and citizens, the contrast between smart schools and regular schools was more prominent.

Considering the fora for the future school discourses, much of the discussion appeared in the teachers' professional magazines and the local press, where journalists were mediating the voices of actors that promoted the development project – typically interviewing the head of the multipurpose centre and school or city personnel involved in the future school programme.

4.3 Dependencies between Ritaharju, the older neighbouring localities, and the city centre

In many planning discussions the building of a community is seen as a value in itself. It is also a given that the inhabitants of new residential areas benefit from the effects of the spirit of village community or a restored community, enhancing integration, co-operation and social control as well as preventing negative outcomes such as social isolation and juvenile delinquency in the area. When new residential areas are scrutinised from other angles, however, the picture may change: neighbouring communities may be afraid of losing services, for example, and at the same time, urban planners, politicians and citizens may be concerned about the development of services and urban structures.

The planning and building of Ritaharju and its multipurpose centre were also seen as a threat to the services in the surrounding areas. This was widely reflected in our data, both in the media as well as in discussions of citizens' associations in the surrounding communities. These views bear much in common with the old theories of dependency in development studies, first proposed by Latin American social scientists (Frank, 1969), addressing uneven global, regional, and urban developments. To put it simply, the idea of dependency is that there is no growth without decline. In the current study, issues related to regional development were constructed through "dependency discourse". Dependency discourse, which also relates to evaluations of school closures in Finland in general (Autti & Hyry-Beihammer, 2014), was apparent in the City local newspaper:

(15)

> Ritaharju imee pienet koulut [..] Pateniemi on [..] niiden alueiden joukossa, jossa väki vähenee eniten ja myös koulujen oppilasmäärät ovat laskussa.[..] Sekä kakkoseen että kolmoseen (työryhmän esittämät vaihtoehdot) sisältyvät Kuivasjärven koulun lopetus vuonna 2011 ja mahdollisesti Kuivasojan koulun lopetus 2013-2020.
>
> Ritaharju is engulfing the small schools […] Pateniemi[2] is […] among the localities where the population is diminishing most and also the numbers of pupils in schools are going down. […] Both the second and the third (proposal) include the closure of Kuivasjärvi school in 2011 and possibly Kuivasoja 2013–2020. (Laine, 2010)

Closing down Kuivasjärvi school (example 15) provoked strong protests as well as active civic and political activities, and was seen as a consequence of building Ritaharju school, of Ritaharju *engulfing* the other schools, as the journalist worded

it. The critique, referring also to the possible overcrowding of Ritaharju school, can be seen in a reader comment to the above article (see example 16):

(16)

> Nyt 3. luokkaa käyviä oppilaita menee kaksi luokallista (yli 40 oppilasta) Kuivasjärvestä Ritaharjuun. Kun he ovat 2011 Ritaharjun koulun viidesluokkalaisia ryhmäkoko paisuu yli 30 oppilaan, koska Aaltokankaalle ja Kuivasrantaan muuttaa uusia perheitä jatkuvasti. Tähän vielä lisätään Herukan oppilaat, joten aika ihmeellistä matematiikkaa harrastavat opetustoimen viranhaltijat

> Now two classes of third-graders […] will move from Kuivasjärvi to Ritaharju. When they are fifth-graders in Ritaharju in 2011, the group size will swell to over 30 pupils because new families are moving to Aaltokangas and Kuivasranta all the time. The Herukka pupils will still be added to this, so it is quite strange mathematics that the officials in the educational administration are applying. (Laine, 2010, reader comment to the article)

In the extract, the writer highlights the rapid growth of the area at the expense of population loss in other residential areas suggesting the school's insufficient capacity to deal with the great numbers of incoming pupils (*group size will swell*; *new families [..] all the time*; *will still be added to this*) evaluating the official estimates of population growth in a negative tone as *quite strange mathematics*. The quote illustrates the more critical stance expressed in the media in contrast to the proponents' voice constructing Ritaharju school as desireable building target.

The planning and building of Ritaharju were also portrayed in the local newspaper as a threat to the existing services in the surrounding areas. Among others, a decision was made to move Kuivasjärvi library to Ritaharju, and a news feature, interviewing the City head of library services, on the library's last working day commented as follows:

(17)

> Kirjaston saaminen omalle asuinalueelle koetaan hyvin tärkeäksi: asukkaat tavallaan kokevat saavansa jonkinlaisen tunnustuksen olemassaololleen. Toisaalta myös uhka oman lähikirjaston lakkauttamisesta herättää reaktion, kuten on saatu nähdä viime päivinä pääkaupunkiseudulla ja jokin vuosi sitten Oulussakin.

> Getting a library in one's own residential area is considered very important: the inhabitants somehow experience that their existence is recognized. On the other hand, the threat of losing one's own local library also triggers a reaction, as we have seen in recent days in the Capital Region and some years back even in Oulu. (Kaitasuo, 2009; see also Rintala, 2010)

Finnish legislation aims to further citizens' equal opportunities to enlightenment through libraries (Library Act 904/1998). The city official, who is responsible for the libraries in the city area, sees a local library as a symbol of official recognition of the residential area (*the inhabitants somehow experience that their existence is recognized*).

There were also plans for a new shopping centre, Ritaportti, quite close to Ritaharju. The project can be seen as a landmark for the area. This bears special resemblances to the concept of iconic architecture connected to consumerism (Sklair 2010). In general, Sklair (2010, p. 136) defines the concept as referring 'to events, people and/or objects that (1) are famous for those within the fields in question (notably popular culture, fashion and sport) and often also for the public at large, and (2) have special symbolic/aesthetic significance attached to them'. It is known that cities wish to draw attention to their economic advancement with

conspicuous buildings around the highways as people are approaching the city. This is visible also in Oulu where the high-tech enterprises and commercial centres have erected high buildings by the side of the motorway from the airport to the high-tech area around the University of Oulu (Appendix, Miettunen, 2004). Ritaportti (referred to as Aurora in planning documents, called Ideapark today), was planned as such a landmark.

The building of Ritaportti was criticized by many for its demolition of the old neighbourhood. This was visualised in pictures in the local newspaper in which excavators were pulling down houses to make way for the shopping centre (Figure 3):

The caption below the picture: Taloja kaadetaan kauppakeskuksen tieltä Ritakummussa [Houses are being pulled down in Ritakumpu to make way for the shopping centre].

Figure 3. Making way for the shopping centre (Mikkonen, 2010 in Kaleva, October, 15; photo by Jukka-Pekka Moilanen).

The demolition process was depicted by the journalist as a *conveyor belt* (*liukuhihnatyönä*) in reaction to the strong need for development and migration to northern Oulu. Preserving the vitality and the attractiveness of the city centre, however, aroused strong reactions expressing counter-dependency. Building shopping centres such as Ritaportti far from the city centre was seen as a challenge to the development of the urban structure. In a statement the Oulu Chamber of Commerce, representing the local business sector, even regarded the new shopping centre as a threat to the attraction of the city centre:

(18)

Oulun ydinkeskustan laajempi kehitys on nyt uhattuna. Maakuntakeskus Oulun keskustan taantuminen on alkamassa ja uhkaa laajan alueen vetovoimaa.

The development of the city centre is now threatened. The degradation of the centre of the municipal centre of Oulu is beginning, which threatens the attraction of the wider region. (Kauppakamari, 2009)

The city council echoed this view in its response to the letter of the Chamber of Commerce. Furthermore, a local politician even stated in his blog that the city of Oulu was being divided into *the old and the new city* (Appendix, Keränen, 2010).

5 Concluding discussion

Our aim in this study was to see through a discourses survey how the development of Ritaharju area and its multipurpose centre was discursively constructed, what the roles of the different participants in this project were, and what was being done through the discourses. The discourses survey mapping the media content and public views brought into the foreground three major discourses contributing to the planning and building of Ritaharju.

The first emphasized "communality" and was brought to the fore especially by government and city administrative officials, who depicted Ritaharju as a modern village community where children would be raised to active citizenship. This discourse entailed vocabulary and imagery related to communities, collaboration, and participation, among others. Altogether, the concept of community was used abundantly in the documents, as was the term village community as an echo of the mythical rural community, referring to the analysis of community studies by Barrett (2015, pp. 183–185). The second discourse, circulated by pedagogic developers, city planning officers in the educational field as well as Future School Program representatives, was closely linked to the communality discourse as communality values were emphasized as an essential element of the future school, characterised as the crown jewel of the City. In addition to new pedagogical solutions, the "future school discourse" also brought forth how people collectively construct the future school as something that can, between the lines, be read to be quite enviable in the eyes of the residents of other areas as well as other schools. Therefore, it needs to be defended by showing how the accumulated experiences can be later used for the good of other areas and schools as well. In the third discourse journalists, politicians, citizens, business representatives, and even some city officials were constructing a critical stance on the "dependencies" between the Ritaharju locality, the older neighbouring localities, and the city centre. This discourse can be characterized as quite emotional, using strong mental images: bulldozers pulling down houses and comments expressing fears of the degradation of the city centre.

The analysis brought to light the diversity of actors in the long-term community planning process. There were community planners, architects, local education authorities, journalists, and local inhabitants taking part in the discussions. Moreover, the Chamber of Commerce, the City council, local politicians, a teachers' professional magazine, and the local university took part in defining and constructing the emerging community. The participants in the public discussions became active in different phases of the planning and building process. First, the community planners and architects presented their ideas about the area to be developed and arranged hearings for the public. When the building process started to become more concrete the media also started to become more interested in the project's impact on local citizens. When the future school and the multipurpose centre became the focus, the central actors were mainly education authorities and professionals echoing the broader discourses related to educating citizens of the future through a school of the future. Gradually, citizens and politicians also started voicing their concerns with respect to the development of the area, offering citizens in different areas in the city equal opportunities to engage.

Considering the discourses at play, the emphasis was first community-centred, based on the introduction and planning phase of the new community. The discourses in this phase emphasized new solutions that would appeal to potential residents. Ritaharju became portrayed as an example of a new way of planning, as

something new in the frame of the concept of smart cities (e.g., Hielkema & Hongisto, 2013). At the same time, it was characterised as restoring something old in the spirit of the traditional village community. The concept of community was used in rhetorical terms, describing the uniqueness of an appealing new residential area, and the IT-based environment was seen as a brand-new means of restoring the old community spirit (cf. also McMillan & Chavis, 1986, about relationships creating a community). Voices of dependency in regard to the surrounding housing areas emerged in the media as well. The first signal of opposition appeared when local journalists began to criticise the building of Ritaharju in regard to public services, e.g., libraries and schools closed in the neighbourhood, the vulnerable neighbouring communities being contested (Barrett, 2015). Finally, when the area was already in use, a counter-dependency was expressed by local politicians and some officials, concerned with the new area as a threat to the development of the city centre and the wider urban structure. Especially, these actors were worried about the weakening position of the city centre due to building residential areas in peripheral uninhabited areas. The conceptions of regional contradictions between old and new residential areas are part of a wider discourse of centre-periphery rhetoric, typical in more peripheral areas.

Regarding the implications of the study, the discourses survey highlighted diverse viewpoints on the community planning and building process. Discourses survey as a research method helped us to explore the multiple voices and perspectives of diverse stakeholders contributing to the development of a phenomenon (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). The participants involved in the discursive construction of Ritaharju were bringing forth their voices from different positions and roles and, hence, with varying decision-making power in society, legitimising or contesting the building process. The dependencies between new developments (Ritaharju multipurpose centre and school) and the already existing infrastructures (the school network) also became visible. Our differing disciplinary perspectives as well as the choice of methodology made it possible to widen our view to understand how the development of a future school was part of a larger whole – firstly, the ideology of active citizenship and secondly, the development of the whole city. All in all, our study shows the intricacy of the preliminary planning process, the diversity of stakeholders with their differing priorities and illustrates the discourses survey as a useful method for unfolding this complexity.

As for the limitations of the study, this study gives only a snapshot of what was occurring when Ritaharju was planned and built. The data review ends in 2010, before the actual opening of the multipurpose centre and the school, by the deliberate and necessary decision to delineate data collection. Discussions about Ritaharju have continued in the media since; the school of Ritaharju has proven to be too small for the needs of the neighbourhood. Thus, one of the neighbouring schools closed down earlier has opened its doors again. It would be interesting to study how Ritaharju and its multipurpose centre are talked about now that the area has been in use for a while, and how this could inform the community planning process. It also needs to be noted that even though the data used in this study were collected over the course of several years, a discourses survey can also be conducted within a shorter period of time. Scollon and Scollon (2004) indeed suggest a quick discourses survey for gaining an initial understanding of the phenomenon at large. The working method of this study could even be applied for other types of planning processes as it helps to elucidate the diversity of participants and discourses that contribute to making sense of the construction process, be it abstract or concrete.

Endnotes

[1] Data extracts will be given in the original language (English or Finnish). Translations are provided in the case of Finnish.
[2] Pateniemi, Kuivasjärvi, and Kuivasoja are older residential areas in the surroundings of Ritaharju.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Data extracts

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