

Bad reputation – bad reality? The intertwining and contested images of a place

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In the early 1990s, prostitution became a visible element in Helsinki and caused a big stir in the Finnish media. Street prostitution became concentrated in a densely-built-up residential area north of the city centre. The prostitution debate stigmatised the area effectively. This article explores the area by interpreting its images in cultural artefacts and in people's minds. The history of the area will be described in order to make the present images understandable. Three types of images will be analysed: images of the place for ordinary people, images of the dangerous neighbourhood and images of bohemian romanticism, which are all associated with the history of the area and reproduced in the prostitution debate.

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Introduction

The aim of this article is to interpret an area by exploring its images in cultural artefacts and in people's minds. The area concerned became known as a district of street prostitutes and kerb-crawlers during the 1990s. The prostitution debate in the media stigmatised the area effectively, the fact which is the point of departure for this study. I will ask why some areas are more vulnerable to get a bad reputation than others and how the prostitution debate used and reconstructed place images. I will also ask what dimensions are apparent in the present reputation of the place. To answer these questions I will describe the history of the area in order to make the present images understandable. I will trace the changes in the images in time and analyse their contents by using examples of various cultural products and opinions of local residents.

The article is based on two studies of street prostitution in Helsinki. The first one is my personal research project based on qualitative data gathered between the years 1993 and 1999, when I lived in the research area and observed the changes in the neighbourhood on a daily basis. The main purpose was to interpret the street prostitution debate and to compare the mediated im-

ages with the experiences of local residents (Tani 2001, 2002). The second one is a research project, the main purpose of which was to analyse the effects of street prostitution on women's everyday lives in Helsinki. The study was made in the form of a mailed questionnaire to women in two areas; the research area consisted of ten blocks of the street prostitution area, while the control area was the rest of Inner Helsinki. The material was collected in May–June 1999. A total of 1,714 women answered the questionnaire, 888 of whom lived in the research area and 826 in the control area (Koskela et al. 2000). Many interesting aspects of place images emerged in both projects but, for practical reasons, they took a minor role in the previous publications. It seemed important to write this article by concentrating on the relations between the place and its images.

First, I will give an overview of some central concepts informing my research. Secondly, I will explain the difficulties of defining the borders of the area studied and note the variation in its naming. Thirdly, I will explore the street prostitution debate as a creator of some new images of the area, and fourthly, I will interpret other existing images by concentrating on three dimensions; the area seen as a place with a nostalgic past, as a dangerous neighbourhood and a stage for bohe-

mian romanticism. Finally, I will consider some contemporary place promotion activities and raise questions about the meanings of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in place images. The intertwining and palimpsest character of the images and the lived experiences will be highlighted.

Images and reputation of place

'Image' is a widely used concept with various meanings, depending on the discipline and the context. Its all-inclusive definition is clearly not a task for this article. Rather, I will survey some aspects relevant in the context of this research. The conceptual basis of the article contains elements of an older behavioural geography, dealing with mental maps and environmental perceptions, as well as viewpoints of humanistic geography, especially elements concerning people's senses of place. At the same time, recent work in cultural geography – the connections between places and the constitution of identities, subjectivities and imaginings – will be reflected.

The origin of the concept of image can be traced to the 1950s business language in the United States. It has since become popular, especially in marketing, but also in political science and media studies (Karvonen 1999: 37; Äikäs 1999: 62).

'Image' was one of the central concepts of behavioural geography of the 1960s and 1970s, when interest was centred on behaviour patterns and environmental perceptions (Gould 1969; Pocock & Hudson 1978; Gold 1980; Walmsley & Lewis 1993). Perception was used as a synonym for personal images of the phenomenal environment (Porteous 1977), and the products of the process of perception were called mental or cognitive maps, images, cognitive representations or schemata. Often the concept of image was connected to visual perception, as Kevin Lynch defined the term in his book 'The Image of the City' (Lynch 1960; see also Lynch 1984).

'Image' was defined as a representation of reality, a metaphorical description of verbal pictures, for example (Burgess 1978), a perception in the absence of an external stimulus (Tuan 1975; Gold 1980), or as constructed from first-hand experience (Burgess & Gold 1985).

Since the behavioural approaches, images have been an important subject of study in humanistic geography as well as in studies of the media and

popular culture. In the humanities and social sciences there has been a growing interest in the meanings of spatiality, which has been called a 'spatial turn'. In geography, at the same time, 'culture', along with 'space', has become one of the key concepts. The meaning of 'culture' and the content of the new approach (the cultural turn) have aroused vivid debates (e.g. Philo 1991; Cosgrove 1993; Duncan 1993; Jackson 1993; Price & Lewis 1993; McDowell 1994; Mitchell 1995; Johnston 1997; Barnett 1998; Cook et al. 2000). The 'cultural turn' has guided geographers to find new approaches to geographical issues and brought them closer to discourses in other culturally and/or socially oriented disciplines. It has occasioned a broader alertness to how people – understood as highly differentiated and multiply positioned but always distinctly social beings – build up shared repertoires of cultural meaning, often embracing place images which may be quite stereotypical in content. These images are negotiated in a more collective terrain of discourse, performance and gesture.

Since the 'cultural turn' in geography, images have been interpreted mainly in relation to socially produced space. The social practices of place and landscape construction and representations of images have been popular subjects of study (e.g. Burgess & Gold 1985; Agnew & Duncan 1989; Zonn 1990; Shields 1991; Anderson & Gale 1992; Barnes & Duncan 1992; Keith & Pile 1993; Aitken & Zonn 1994; Gold & Ward 1994; Banks 1998). Place images are understood as historically produced and actively culturally contested. Language is seen to be important 'as a medium and mediator by which intersubjective meanings are shared' (Shields 1991), and the question of representation has become central.

Sometimes it is useful to distinguish between a public image and a mental image, as Äikäs (1999, 2001) has stated. 'Public image' refers to an intentionally produced impression, while 'mental image' means a mental representation of something, not by direct perception, but by memory and imagination (OED Online 2001; cf. Äikäs 1999: 59). Sometimes, however, the split between the concepts seems to be too violent. The relation between public and mental images is more like a continuum in a process of making and interpreting meanings to the world. In every mental image, there is always something shared and produced, as there is always the level of subjective interpretation in public images.

In addition to 'image', 'reputation' is also used in the studies of places and their representations. The reputation of a place can be defined as a combination of the shared images, stereotyped meanings and mythical generalisations of elements that people attach to a certain place in their minds. Reputation is not necessarily comparable to the reality of place. When the characteristics of a place change radically, place images and the reputation of that place sometimes stay as they have always been. It can be said that the place has been stigmatised, and these stigmas usually outlive a particular image. Shields (1991: 256) argues that the changes "necessitate not just an adjustment of the myth, 'cleaning out' the old images and installing new ones, but a restructuring of the entire mythology and the development of new metaphors by which ideology is presented". This is an interesting point of view in considering changes in place images and the reputation of a place. The reputation of place can be seen as a product of public opinion, while the images may represent subjective experiences of place. Reputation is more stable and often a product of repeated ways to represent the place. The formation of a reputation takes more time, while the images can be more personal and can be more easily changed.

Rob Shields (1991) defines place images by using the concept of stereotype. Place images "are the various discrete meanings associated with real places or regions regardless of their character in reality. Images, being partial and often either exaggerated or understated, may be accurate or inaccurate. They result from stereotyping, which over-simplifies groups of places within a region, or from prejudices towards places or their inhabitants" (Shields 1991: 60). Shields defines place images as meanings attached to a real place, but images can also be created without any relation to a real environment. We have many place images which may refer to wholly imagined places – they may be the products of our own imagination, or perhaps reinterpretations of imagined places in films, literature, and other art forms. In this article, image and reputation of place are interpreted side by side, since I think it is artificial to make any strict separation between these two terms.

Next, I will introduce the area researched by defining its borders. This may sound simple, but in this case, it reveals more than the geographical location of the area. The area will be contex-

tualised both spatially and socially in relation to its surrounding areas.

Blurred identity of place: defining the borders

Usually, identification of an area is quite simple: it can be named, and defining its borders makes the distinction between it and the surrounding areas obvious. Although the definitions may just be mental constructions built by the researcher, they are usually generally recognised and easily taken for granted. In this particular case, the situation is more complicated and needs to be explained more carefully.

In the 1990s, prostitution became concentrated in a densely-built-up residential area north of the city centre. In order to explore the phenomenon from the viewpoint of the residents, I conducted in-depth interviews among them and among some social workers in the area. When I asked them what they called the area, I got answers like these:

I usually say Kallio... Apparently, it is Alppila, or somehow... But nobody knows where Alppila is.

I would say this is more Sörkkä than Kallio.

If I have to choose, I live in the district of Harju.

Yes, it is a matter of taste.

The name of the area often becomes established as a symbol for a particular space. Images and the reputation of place are closely linked with the identity of place, and place images and spatial identities can be seen in the context of the institutionalization of regions in the way Paasi (1986, 1991a) defines the term. He sees four stages in the process of the spatial institutionalisation, which may be entirely or partly simultaneous: the constitution of *territorial shape*, *symbolic shape*, and *institutions* and, finally, *establishment* in the regional system and regional consciousness of the society concerned. In the context of this research the constitution of symbolic shape is particularly relevant. Paasi (1991a: 245) defines it as follows: "The increasing number and use of territorial symbols is crucial for creating the symbolic significance of a region. One essential symbol is the name of the region, which connects its image with the regional consciousness."

In this case, the area has a name which is used

in official contexts, but in public speech – for example in the media – it is named differently. There is no consensus on its name even among the residents, as can be seen in the quotations above. Although the interviewees talked about their own neighbourhood, not many of them seemed to be sure which was the appropriate name for it. Some of them were convinced that they lived in Kallio, some others called the same area Harju, Sörnäinen (Sörkkä) or Alppila. I find it interesting to ask why this particular area has no clearly established name, and whether this has something to do with the images associated with it.

Places, regions and areas can also exist after their possible deinstitutionalization as documented in written texts and as recalled by local people, as some other studies have stated (e.g. Paasi 1991a, 1991b; Riikonen 1995, 1997). The residents of one region can ‘actually live in the worlds of different kinds’, and ‘may have very different images in their minds about spatial reality and its regional identity’ (Riikonen 1995: 100). Paasi and Riikonen (*ibid.*) have used ‘generation’ to explain these differences. In my study on the street prostitution area, the situation seemed to be quite different. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Pitkäsilta Bridge separated the prestigious areas of the city centre from the northern working-class areas, and acted as a powerful symbol separating these two social worlds. In the early days of the area, there was a strong sense of place among the residents, which could be seen in the naming of the smaller areas north of the bridge. There were also violent street fights between the gangs of the neighbouring areas. Even when the local residents made a clear distinction between these areas, the outsiders saw them as one working-class district, which was usually called Sörnäinen after the neighbouring industrial area and harbour. Although the naming practices have changed during the history of the area, it is impossible to define any generation-bound names any longer. In my interviews, there was no connection between the residents’ age and their ways of naming the neighbourhood.

The name of the area can be defined by comparing its ‘official’ name with the actual naming practices. The area is located in the administrative district of Alppiharju, which can be divided into two sub-districts, Alppila and Harju. The area is colloquially called Kallio after its neighbouring district (Fig. 1). The way the names are attached to a certain area varies, however. An example of

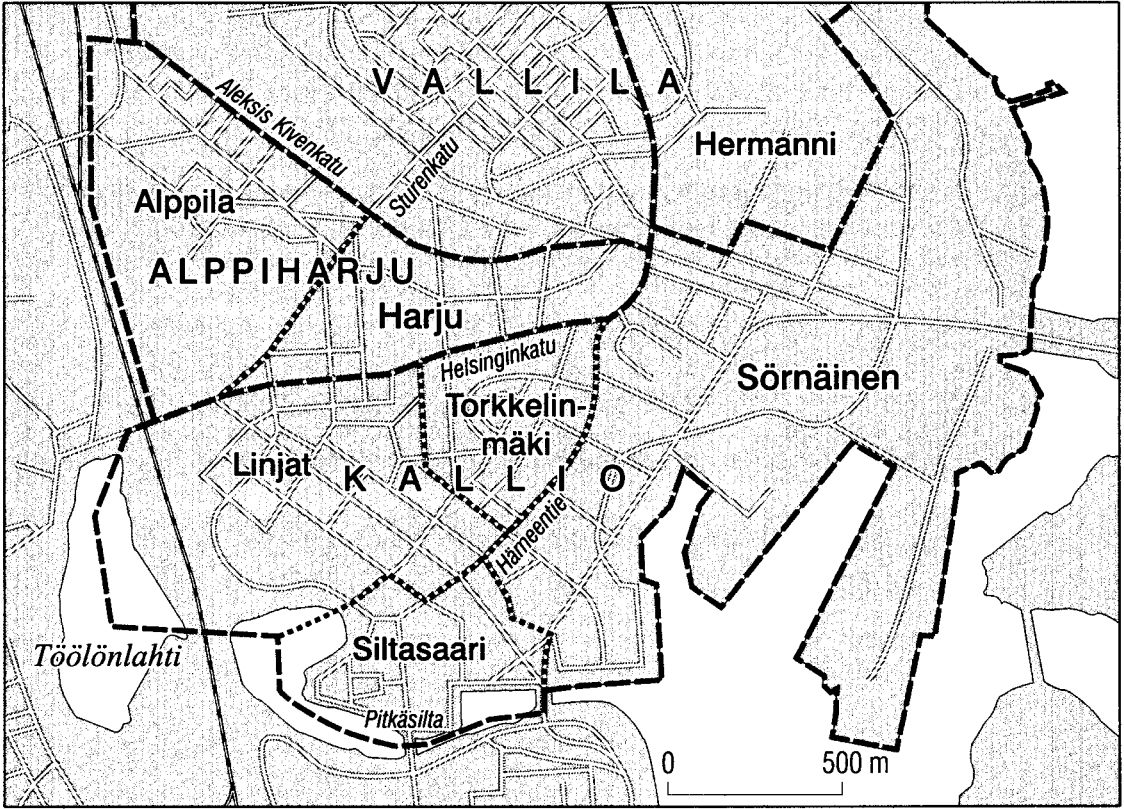
this is the housing notices in the newspapers, which use various names. Compared to the neighbouring areas, the confusion is very obvious. The neighbouring areas have a strong place identity, but the research area seems to differ markedly. It seems to be an area that is located on the fringe of other regions.

Another way to approach the question of the name is to explore the area by using Lynch’s (1960) way of defining districts and edges. Officially, although Helsinginkatu is the border between Kallio and Harju, it does not really separate these two areas either visually or functionally, but rather forms a connecting link between them. It is one of the most important shopping streets in the area and is also an excellent transport link.

Kallio is widely known as the area located on the north side of Pitkäsilta, but Harju as a name is not established in colloquial speech. Kallio has a well-established reputation as an old working-class area, and both positive and negative images have been associated with it during its history. Although the two areas have a similar history, the identity of Harju seems less certain. For example, thirty-five geography students wrote to me about the images that Kallio and Alppiharju evoke in their minds. Most of them did not even mention Alppiharju in their texts, and those few who did said that they did not have any particular image of the place. Alppiharju was said to be an unfamiliar name for a region, and was found difficult to define. Most of them had quite strong images of Kallio, however, and it was often “stretched” to the neighbouring areas. This explains why I will call it Kallio even though it is the administrative district of Alppiharju or Harju.

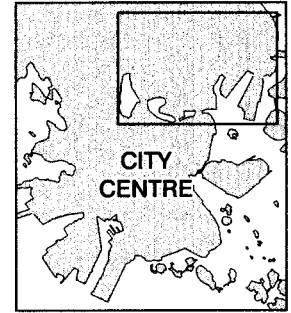
Sudden changes: prostitution in the neighbourhood

When street prostitution appeared on the streets of Harju, it caused a big stir both in the media and among some locals, who were upset by kerb-crawling. As described elsewhere (Koskela et al. 2000; Tani 2002), prostitution had an effect on the ways female residents use public space in their neighbourhood, but also affected public images of the area. I have analysed the changes in the debate in detail elsewhere (Tani 2002). Here, I will concentrate on the images which the media produced of the area.



----- district Sub-district

Fig. 1. The location of the area studied in Helsinki, Finland: Harju and its surroundings.



In the newspaper articles on street prostitution, there were stories about firms that were thinking of moving away because of the disturbance suffered by their employees, and also for fear of the bad reputation of the area. The tabloid *Ilta-Sanomat* (8th December 1995) reported how some newspapers had published articles on prostitution and provided pictures of female office-workers on their way home. These connections caused confusion among the female employees. Another article described the difficulties that a housing company formed by the apartment owners had because of the falling price of offices in the area. The owners were worried that prostitution and kerb-crawling could cause the neighbourhood to decline by strengthening the negative image of the area (*Helsingin Sanomat* 21st December 1995).

The local newspapers were especially concerned about the effect that prostitution might have on the reputation of the area. They quoted

the report of the City Planning Committee on prostitution (*Kallio ja Ympäristö* 7th December 1997), which argued that prostitution made the reputation of place even worse in the areas of poorer people as they called the area north of Pitkäsilta. In its leading article (*Kallio ja Ympäristö* 27th October 1996) the local newspaper accused the media of defaming Kallio and its environment. It was argued that because of the effective 'advertising' of the area as a centre of street prostitution, the local residents had to suffer from heavy traffic caused by curious outsiders and the subse-

quent traffic prohibitions. The paper suggested that the media debate should be stopped or made more impartial in relation to such residential areas.

The nation-wide media did not pay much attention to the issues concerning the reputation of place when it reported on the street prostitution in Kallio. The problems of prostitution were represented by and large as local. When the prostitution spread into the streets of the city centre, however, the concern about place image became acute. The tabloid *Ilta-Sanomat* (9th September 1997) interviewed some female politicians who felt that the prostitution in main city streets could be harmful to the image of the city. Nobody expressed concern over the bad reputation of the Kallio area. This is an interesting example of the fact that there seems to be some kind of 'official' Helsinki, the image of which it is important to protect. The areas with a bad reputation are imprinted in people's minds so strongly that defaming them seems to bother nobody outside the area.

During the winter 1996–1997, the media seemed to start to 'forget' the issue of street prostitution. There were only some occasional articles about the situation in Kallio, one of which approached the subject from a wholly new point of view. *Ilta-Sanomat* headlined the article "3,400 bank employees are hidden in the dilapidated 'Flesh Valley': Teollisuuskatu is nowadays the Wall Street of the Vallila area" (*Ilta-Sanomat* 9th January 1997). The point of the article was to describe the two different worlds in the same urban milieu. It was argued that the Finnish version of Wall Street was situated in the same area as the street prostitution had concentrated in Helsinki. The tabloid described the neighbourhood thus:

Skyscrapers with glass walls line Wall Street in Manhattan. There are service stations and heavy traffic in Teollisuuskatu in the Vallila district. In both places there are people doing the same job in their exchange trading halls wearing white shirts and silk ties. --- In the neighbourhood there are cars parked in vacant sites, undistinguished industrial premises, and residential buildings blackened by exhaust fumes. The only beautiful building is the former mortuary. If you see someone, it is highly likely that he or she will be wearing a wind-cheater or quilted jacket. (Ilta-Sanomat 9th January 1997)

The article continues with a description of the concentration of exchange trading by several banks in the area and shows two pictures from the street prostitution area, one taken in the after-

noon and another one just before midnight. The legends of the pictures make a clear distinction between the daytime and nighttime reality: "In the daytime it is peaceful in the Wall Street of Vallila", but "At night prostitutes swarm around the Merita bank buildings" (*Ilta-Sanomat* 9th January 1997). In the first picture, there are some cars parked along the street, which two men are crossing – one in the foreground, the other in the background. There is snow on the ground. In the second picture, the angle is almost the same: the same two buildings are portrayed, but now, there are five people – probably women – standing on the street corner in the light of street lamps, two of them holding umbrellas. The difference of these pictures is not so much in their content, but their context. Legends tell us what we should see in the pictures, and the text tells us what we should think about these two worlds, one of the wealthy bank employees, the other of the not-so-wealthy local residents and 'swarming' prostitutes.

In order to analyse the images people have attached to this area, I will describe its history briefly. I will then concentrate on three types of image: images of the place for ordinary people, images of the dangerous neighbourhood and images of bohemian romanticism, which are all associated with the history of the area, as I will show. The prostitution debate will be analysed by interpreting examples of the reconstructed images within the debate.

History of a working-class quarter

Harju and its neighbouring area, Kallio, both have histories that go back to the end of the 19th century. Helsinki was growing very fast because of rapid industrialisation. New housing areas were needed for people who came to Helsinki looking for jobs in the factories. There were some farms to the north of city centre, one of which was called Kallio and the other Harju. There were also some restaurants in the area outside the city centre before the residential areas were built, some catering to peasants visiting Helsinki and some to upper-class people who travelled there from the city centre. Houses for the workers were built in the area of the farms. They were two-storey buildings, the first storey of stone and the second of wood. The area was incorporated into the town plan in 1901. These working-class areas were densely populated: over four persons per room on

average. Population density was the highest there, and living conditions were extremely poor. Because of the poor accommodation and the poverty of the inhabitants, all kinds of social problems became a part of everyday life in Harju and Kallio from the beginning of their history.

At the beginning of the 20th century the distribution of liquor was concentrated in a relatively small area in the city centre, and in Harju and Kallio selling or serving alcohol was not allowed (Helsingin kaupungin historia 1956: 282). These restrictions acted against themselves, boosting the illegal liquor trade. During prohibition (from 1919), bootlegging was the norm in these areas, and even after repeal of the law in 1932, it was widely known that the illicit liquor trade still existed there. Vaasankatu in particular became famous for bootlegging.

Beside bootlegging, prostitution also characterized these densely populated working-class areas. Many brothels were situated near the city centre, especially in the Punavuori area. They were obliged to go out of business in 1884 when it was decreed that only two prostitutes could live together. Brothels were officially closed, and many of the prostitutes went back to Sweden or moved to Viborg. Many, however, stayed in Helsinki and continued their business by themselves. Even though the brothels have been forbidden by law since then, there have been times when they have appeared again and been allowed to continue their activities. During the 1930s, the brothels were operating quite openly in the centre of Helsinki. (Häkkinen 1995).

While the brothels were for upper-class men, street prostitution was for working-class men and soldiers. Streets near the restaurants were the most popular places for prostitutes to find their clients. The number of street prostitutes was at its greatest at the beginning of the twentieth century and during the First World War when there were hundreds of female prostitutes working in the streets of Helsinki (Häkkinen 1995). Working-class districts like Kallio became places for street prostitutes.

Poor living conditions in the Kallio area and the social problems described above were powerful factors in creating the negative image of the area. However, the reality changed during the rapid industrialisation after the Second World War. The massive migration from rural areas to Helsinki began in the 1950s, and the reputation of the area began to change. The average standard of living

improved in Finland, and people were able to choose better living conditions in the newly-built areas of the city fringes. Kallio and Harju, because of their location near the city centre and their excellent traffic routes, became popular among young childless couples and singles. Many of them were students.

Even today the area is very densely populated. The mean size of the dwellings is the smallest in Helsinki (38 m²) and so is the mean size of households (1.3 persons). In Harju there are about 7,500 inhabitants living in an area of 0.27 km². The proportions of young adults and old people are great and, because of the smallness of the flats, the proportion of children is the smallest in Helsinki. The area is more homogenous in relation to the native language (93% Finnish) and to the nationality of its inhabitants (only 3.4% foreigners) than the average for Helsinki (*Helsinki alueittain* 2000).

The old images of Kallio and its environment are still imprinted in many people's minds, and the working-class history is often mentioned when people are asked about the image of the area. The meaning of the image has changed its content, however, over the years. Next, I will describe popular images of Kallio by concentrating on three dimensions; the first emphasises the long working-class tradition, the second one stresses the negative aspects of this image, while the third adds some romantic gloss to the old images. The analysis is based on my in-depth interviews, letters from former and present residents, the writings of some geography students and the interviews with local shopkeepers, which were published on the Internet. In addition to these materials, I will also use some cultural products in my analysis.

Place and its nostalgic past

The texts concerning Kallio and its surroundings often mention the working-class history of the area and highlight the importance of the past.

Kallio evoked strong images in the minds of the students whom I asked to describe their images of certain areas. Many defined them by describing the physical environment. The location was usually seen as excellent, but the buildings were not seen so positively; many mentioned the greyness of the area, and wrote about non-aesthetic images. The history of the area was perceived as

strong, the present day often associated with social problems, and the spirit of the place in the future was thought to remain despite the changes that may occur. Many of them described Kallio by mentioning its reputation as a working-class area.

Workers' areas are often associated with the thoughts of ordinary, decent, unpretending, real people, to make a clear distinction from 'others'. As compared to the students' images, many shopkeepers, whose interviews were published on the website of the area (*Pitkäsillan väärällä puolella* 2000), emphasised the long traditions in their neighbourhood. Many of them mentioned how their customers were part of the nice and decent folk that has lived in the area. They talked about the area from the viewpoint of small-scale entrepreneurs and often compared the profits they made with the earlier, better days. Many saw the underground as a major reason for their business problems; nowadays it was easier for people to go straight to the city centre or to the shopping malls and 'forget' their local shops.

Although the daily reality in the workers' areas of the past is often described by emphasising its negative sides, it is sometimes portrayed differently, as the following extract from a former resident's letter indicates:

Most of the people who lived in the neighbourhood were decent folk, ordinary workers. There were always some youngsters who were hanging around the tough guys, imitating them and admiring them, but they were not really tough themselves. Some of them were real cowards. Many of them never got into fights nor perpetrated any offences.

The reputation of Kallio as a place for ordinary people has also been repeated in the media. For example, in an article published by the *Kotiliesi* magazine (12th July 1996) life in Kallio was described thus:

People who live in Kallio are used to living and being with other people. Life is visible on the streets there. People are straightforwardly what they really are. What happens within four walls elsewhere happens on the streets in Kallio.

A female resident who had been living in the research area described her neighbourhood by saying that its reputation seemed to be worse than the reality. She emphasised the residents' strong attachment to their environment, although many of them have had problems and sorrows in their life – the biggest problem in her opinion was al-

cohol. She defined the ambiguous character of the area as follows:

The streetscape may scare people with its staggering boozers, but here you can also find humanity, community spirit and care for neighbours. You must have a certain kind of character to be happy here.

There were some things in the daily reality of the area that were sometimes interpreted as traces of the old community spirit:

Some permanent residents sometimes had barbecues and drank beer together in the courtyard of our block. I thought there was a kind of old-time spirit there, like in the good old days, when the residents maybe had closer contacts with each other.

This kind of 'community spirit' refers to the ideas of shared values in a neighbourhood. As I have described elsewhere (Tani 2002), the residents who protested against street prostitution and kerb-crawling often justified their actions by arguing that 'the neighbourhood was *their* space, and they had every right to fight for it. They created an idea of shared values in the area by highlighting the view that when they were acting against prostitution, they were acting for *the whole community*'. By stressing the differences between themselves and the prostitutes, they placed the prostitutes in a marginal position in the area both socially and spatially. In the public debate, the residents' viewpoints were portrayed as questions of moral values. The constructed 'otherness' of prostitutes and kerb-crawlers turned into social exclusion on the streets (cf. Shields 1991; Goodall 1995; Sibley 1995; Duncan 1996; Hubbard 1998, 1999b).

Although life in the workers' area must have been hard, its *image* has changed in the course of time. Nostalgic elements of the past are often highlighted both in cultural products and in people's memories. Working-class people of the past are represented as honest and decent folk, and their ways of spending their leisure time are also portrayed from an understanding viewpoint. This positive colouring of the past occurs frequently; memory always simplifies, forgets and highlights certain elements, and by doing so, 'greater coherence may be created than was actually present' (Pocock 1982; Lowenthal 1975, 1985).

Life in the dangerous neighbourhood

Because of the history of poor living conditions, there are many negative images that people have

of Kallio: for many, it is known as *the area of poor people, crime, violence, and bootlegging*. The reality of the beginning of the 20th century with bootleggers on the streets has been imprinted on people's minds even if they never have experienced those times themselves. In fact, the bootlegging continued in the area for decades, but during the 1990s the phenomenon was not so common because the restaurants were allowed to stay open later. The people who experienced the bootlegging and the street fights in the area in their childhood or youth still associate them with the images of the area. Some residents still mention the violent history when asked about the images of the area.

Cultural products have kept the old images alive. Kallio has been a particularly popular subject in literature and songs. Many films have also been shot there. Because of these produced images, the area's reputation precedes it, even among outsiders. Both local residents and others use these images in their speech.

The images of violence in the area do relate to everyday reality. The quarter around the Sörnäinen metro station is observed to be one of the most violent areas in the city (Tuominen 1999). Although the violent attacks have been concentrated in this small area, the violence is often thought to exist in the whole district. The Kallio area is often described in terms of fear (cf. Koskela & Tuominen 1995).

Beside the crime and the violence, *drunkenness* has often been part of the image of Kallio. Of the thirty-five geography students who wrote about their images, fourteen mentioned alcoholics in their answers. It is impossible to show that there are more alcoholics in Kallio than in other parts of the city, but if the images are to be believed, that seems to be the case.

Since the beginning of the street prostitution debate, the research area has been portrayed as a space of struggles over the control of public space, or as a landscape of sexual harassment, violence and fear (Koskela et al. 2000; Tani 2002). The fear has been connected not only to harassment on the streets but also to the ideas of prostitution as a threat to the homogeneity of the community. In other words, by representing the prostitutes and kerb-crawlers as outsiders in the neighbourhood, the protesters and the media created an imagined divide between 'us' (residents/protesters/decent people) and 'them' (prostitutes/kerb-crawlers). The fact that the majority of the

street prostitutes were foreigners made this kind of 'othering' even easier.

Prostitution was related to other social problems in the area both in the media and in the opinions of local residents; it was argued that prostitution, crime and drugs are intertwined and, because of these 'side-effects' of prostitution, stricter control strategies should be imposed. Such associations between 'asocial' or 'immoral' lifestyles and prostitution are often represented as initiating neighbourhood decline (cf. Hope & Shaw 1988; Herbert 1993; Hubbard 1999b; Weitzer 2000).

In the survey concerning the effects of street prostitution in women's daily life in Helsinki (Koskela et al. 2000), the Kallio area was seen problematic for many reasons. Many respondents were concerned about the reputation of the place. Only 9% of them thought that their area had a good reputation, whereas 76% of those living in the control area (other parts of Inner Helsinki) did. Only 27% of respondents living in Harju felt very comfortable in their neighbourhood, versus 67% in the control area. Street prostitution and kerb-crawling had negative effects on the images, but there were also many other reasons for the discontent of the residents. Many mentioned insecurity and unrest on the streets, the weak sense of community among the people, drug addicts, crime and recurrent disturbances. Identification with one's own neighbourhood was much lower than in the rest of Inner Helsinki. Although it is difficult to estimate how much these factors arose from the everyday reality in the neighbourhood, it is obvious that they had a powerful effect on the images, and thus also affected the experiences of the residents in their daily lives. Prostitution was easily linked to other problems in the area, and was often seen as an indication of the neighbourhood decline.

Some respondents felt that there were too many social problems concentrated in their neighbourhood. In their opinion, the daily reality seemed to be depressing and too hard:

The few parks in the area are completely taken over by drunks and junkies. You can't even take your children to the playground, because it is full of broken glass and used syringes. My doorstep is the kitchen, bedroom, toilet, ashtray and basin for the vomit of the professional drinkers. And nobody even tries to do anything about it. We can't even talk about well-being of the residents; it is fruitless to even think of security; you have to be afraid on behalf of your chil-

dren all the time, and the prices of the apartments come down...

Although the images of danger and nostalgia can easily be regarded as opposites, they can also be considered to work together in the process of creating reputation of place. Representations of a 'golden' past of the neighbourhood emphasise thoughts of community spirit, neighbourliness and decency, but these representations are also used for constructing notions of 'right and wrong', for allowing justifications for insiders (the 'decent' local community) closing ranks against outsiders (the 'non-decent' others). They serve in the discourses of many as a counterpoint to the degeneration of the current situation. In other words, a temporal discourse of decline, of loss over the years, is adding another layer to the 'othering' of drunks, junkies, prostitutes and kerb-crawlers in Kallio.

Bohemian romanticism

Although the area is still defined in relation to its background as a working-class district, the reality there has changed in recent decades. In the 1980s it became popular among young, highly-educated people who appreciated the location near the city centre. The housing prices there were not as high as in other places near the centre, so that many young singles and childless couples found the small apartments in the area attractive. Kallio was also appreciated because of its history, which was thought to create charm and a certain *bohemian romanticism* to the area. Housing prices rose and middle-class people moved in. In the economic boom of the late 1980s the area was clearly gentrified (Mäenpää 1991; Tuominen 1997).

The images of the bohemian lifestyle are quite common in public opinion and in the cultural products relating to Kallio. It is said that many artists live in the area and the number of the students there is great. Kallio has been a popular subject for authors, film producers and musicians. Some of the authors have described the life in the past when the area was still a working-class neighbourhood (Ruuth 1969; Saisio 1975; Mutka 1996, to name but a few), while others have concentrated more on the contemporary stories based on the area (Kauranen 1981; Melleri 1997). In films Kallio and its neighbouring areas have been

represented either as the background for the role characters in their everyday life or as the major cause of their troubles (for cinematic representations of Helsinki, see Tani 1995). In rock lyrics the most popular images of Kallio have been the ones of working-class romantics, lonely people and depression (see Tani & Kopomaa 1995).

Some people reflected these romantic images when they wrote about their own relationship to the area:

The old working-class image is alive and well in many people's minds and without doubt it feeds a kind of romantic feeling, especially in the consciousness of the people – like myself – who have a working-class background - - - However, we have broken with our background because of our education so that this kind of longing for a real working-class community is just like a nostalgic pathos for estranged people.

A female resident (herself an artist) reflected critically on the images of her neighbourhood:

In some kind of 'bohemian' or 'artistic' circles Kallio has a good reputation; there is 'life' and the 'taste for life' here. That might refer to the street prostitutes and outcasts at the pubs and bars; there is 'colour' - - - Personally, I don't think of the gutter as a representation of life.

Some residents said that they see prostitution as a profession (often mentioned as the oldest profession in the world) like any other job. Prostitutes should have the same right to do their work in peace as any other professionals in society. Some saw them as providing 'essential services for the sick, the deformed, the invalid, the ugly, etc.' (Goodall 1995: 129; see also Roberts 1992). Tolerance and understanding differences were also linked to the ideas of the urban way of life: Some emphasised that since the Kallio area is the most urbanised area in Helsinki, people should understand social and cultural diversity in their neighbourhood. In the media the diversity of social groups was sometimes highlighted – these include lesbians and gays, the elderly, students, artists, working professionals, the unemployed and many others (Lahtinen 1995). Therefore, it was argued, the prostitutes should also have their place in the area:

In my opinion this neighbourhood is suitable for [street prostitution]; most of the people here are workers and more or less shabby, or the rabble. This is an undeniable fact and the red-light districts have been located in such neighbourhoods in foreign countries. We can forget the hypocrisy; I think Hel-

sinki needs its own Reperbahn or Pigalle, too, and this area suits that purpose well.

The nostalgic image of a working-class past also figures in this discourse of romanticism. The cultural-artistic residents strive to recreate a new form of community, only in this case an *inclusionary* community tolerant of others rather than an *exclusionary* community wishing to shut its borders against anyone departing from commonly accepted norms. In such a view, prostitutes in particular cease to be seen in the more typical negative and prejudicial fashion. In this 'bohemian discourse' there is the idea that prostitutes should also have their place in the neighbourhood, among other people. This discourse emphasises the diversity of sub-cultures within the area, and questions the implicit assumptions of prostitution as a totally negative phenomenon in the society.

Place promotion at the local level?

Place promotion, which can be defined as a 'conscious use of publicity and marketing to communicate selective images of specific geographical localities or areas to a target audience', has become increasingly popular since the mid-1980s worldwide (Ward & Gold 1994; Hall 1998). Promoted images have become more important in the post-industrial economy where traditional location requirements are no longer as important as they used to be in the industrial economies. Cities and regions need to establish new advantages for themselves. The images have been integral parts of urban regeneration programmes, but they have also been used when cities have competed to host mega-events such as the Olympic Games or to get nomination as a European City of Culture (Ward 1998; Holcomb 1999).

What has not been explored so much is the interaction between the images produced and the everyday lives of people who live in the place. In the case of Helsinki, the place promotion efforts have usually concerned the city centre, which has been the area most frequently visited by the tourists. During the year 2000, when Helsinki was a European City of Culture, the significance of residential areas and their images was also recognised.

In Kallio a tendency to create positive images of the area has been strengthened in recent years. In some newspaper articles, Kallio has been de-

scribed as a 'trendy' (*Metro* 17th December 1999), 'fascinating' area with a 'strange kind of charm' (*Helsingin Sanomat* 21st February 2000). These new images have often been linked with trendy bars and pubs, and with fashionable specialized shops. The media have stressed both the long traditions of the neighbourhood and its cultural and social diversity.

Residents and some local associations have organized gatherings at which they have explicitly tried to find positive ways to improve the image (and the reality) of their neighbourhood. One example is the campaign during which local residents planted out flowers in a park with the help of the police and the Public Works Department. Although their main purpose was to 'expel' the drunks and vandals from the park, they decided to do it in a positive way. The press reported how the residents had every right to promote social interaction in the park, and if their own means were not effective enough, they could ask for help from the police (*Helsingin Sanomat* 4th June 1997).

There have been many signs of increasing cultural activity in the area in recent years. For example, a cultural network (*Kallion Kulttuuriverkosto*) was founded in 1997 to encourage collaboration between local artists and other culture-oriented people. Since then, the network has taken part in organizing cultural happenings every autumn and spring in the area. In 1998 the Kallio theatre was founded to make 'drama of familiar topics for the ordinary people' (*Helsingin Sanomat* 17th December 1998). The themes were found in the neighbourhood; there were productions on the prostitute's life, on the images of Kallio and on the daily life of lonely people, for example. *Push Firma Beige* is another example of strengthening the links between the local environment and art, an art gallery which enables 'direct social interaction' with its environment and acts as an intermediary between art and local communities.

Another example was a new culture club, which was launched in 1996 at the street corner café situated in the place with the worst reputation within the area. The contrast between the planned cultural activities and the surrounding reality was described in the following way (*Helsingin Sanomat* 29th November 1996):

Theatre without any ticket reservations, music without any stress for the musicians, poetry, magic, art

for free. There has been a lack of a public space, which would be more interesting than pubs where customers go in for arm wrestling. The atmosphere inside the Melba café is tailor-made for the culture club. Outside, however... three glass walls separate the ground floor café from the wildest corners of Helsinki...

Such activities created new images of the area; many of the active cultural agents wanted to stress the sense of positive action in order to counter the older negative images. Some residents stressed positive action in relation to prostitution by mentioning the importance of taking care of the physical environment, or by encouraging the residents to take possession of public space in their neighbourhood.

Conclusions

Industrial cities and working-class areas have been seen in terms of the hard-working people, who have rough jobs and rough ways to spend their leisure time (cf. Shields 1991: 229; Taylor et al. 1996; Ward 1998: 216). The images of these areas have been ambiguous; they have been portrayed both as areas of harsh living conditions and multiple problems and as areas of a nostalgic past and bohemian romanticism. In the case of the Kallio area, these two are easy to recognise.

The boom in gentrification of the 1980s in Kallio did not last long. The recession in the early 1990s broke the trend: housing prices fell, and pubs invaded many empty former corner shops. Tuominen (1997) has argued that the area returned to its working-class roots, which could be perceived as a certain urban roughness. Unemployment rates rose and social problems became more usual. The old images of the area revived: images of poverty, unemployment, crime and violence were apparent once again, but some new elements, drugs and prostitution, emerged as well. Fear of the 'other' and the possible neighbourhood decline also formed part of the images. The debate can be viewed as a reconstructive force in relation to the existing images. Those who saw prostitution as a threat to the community represented the issue by emphasising the negative aspect of the image; for them the area was a neighbourhood characterized by crime, immoral ways of life, and fear. They thought that prostitution was linked with other problems in the area.

Those who thought that prostitution was part of

urban life did not want to blame on the prostitutes or kerb-crawlers, but highlighted the positive sides of the diversity of the local culture. For them, the old images of bohemian romanticism were more accurate than the negative ones. They saw Kallio as a suitable place for prostitution, because of the long traditions of tolerance of difference in the neighbourhood.

The third type of image was linked with the working-class past of the area. Some people – and every now and then the media – described the neighbourhood as a place for ordinary, decent people. The community protesters used this kind of thinking in their actions as well. They stressed that the area was their place, and they had every right to define the appropriate way of living there. For them, prostitution was a threat to the simplicity of the imagined past.

Prostitution in public space raised such a stir in Finland partly because there were no established ways of dealing with the questions of marginal groups. Since Finnish identity and culture has been based on the rural environment and traditional shared values, people have not been capable of tolerating cultural or social differences in their neighbourhood (Tani 2002; cf. Åström 2000). Finland's role as one of the Scandinavian welfare societies changed quite quickly during the economic recession of the 1990s (cf. Kattelus 1996). Massive unemployment and problems like prostitution, homelessness and drug abuse, which had been marginal, became more widespread. At the same time, Finland took in more immigrants than before. From the viewpoint of public opinion, foreigners were easy scapegoats for the economic and social ills of society and all the more so in the case of prostitution because of the visibility of foreign prostitutes on the streets. The change was so sudden that no political or cultural practices for dealing with these issues were established.

In this article I have represented the Finnish street prostitution debate from the viewpoint of image construction. Street prostitution raised many emotional, practical and moral opinions, and by doing so it affected the subjective and intersubjective images of the area. The area was stigmatised as a neighbourhood that was different from its surroundings.

In December 1999, a new municipal ordinance came into force in Helsinki. It prohibited prostitution in public places and caused a temporary displacement of the prostitutes and the kerb-

crawlers to the neighbouring city of Vantaa, which also then prohibited visible prostitution. Despite these changes, the reputation of the Kallio area as a place for prostitution and kerb-crawling was imprinted in people's minds. Only time will tell how long the neighbourhood will be remembered for prostitution. Whatever the case, the bad reputation will affect the everyday reality in the neighbourhood for a long time, because there is always interaction between the lived and the imagined. The images are intertwined with the reality.

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