



Let us now take a look at the research on perceived safety and fear of crime. This is a rather important theme in our Urban experience course because urbanization has been shown to be among the best predictors of fear of crime. So, the question is: is urban environment always perceived as unsafe? Can we try to plan a safe city?

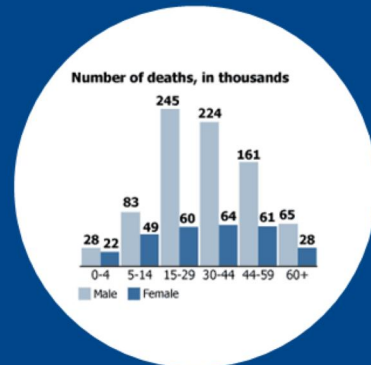
Safety has been traditionally among the most important criteria of high quality environment, at least here in Finland. Generally, the level of perceived safety is very high in Finland compared to many other countries. For example in a study realized in the city of Turku, only one percent of respondents perceived their living environment unsafe. The situation is very different in many other parts of the world. For example in Italy half of the parents are afraid of strangers who can potentially hurt children when they play outdoors. In Finland only about 10% of parents feel that way. In many countries perceived fear can very concretely restrict people from using urban space – not only children. Perhaps some of you have personal experiences about these kind of urban spaces.

Perceived safety

VS.

Actual safety

Traffic safety
Fear of crime
Social safety
Accident safety



Before going further we will first have to distinguish between PERCEPTIONS of safety and fear from ACTUAL safety. Both can be measured: actual safety is typically measured with statistics about, for example, the number of incidents or victims in a certain area at a certain time. You can also measure perceived safety, individual experiences of safety and its various dimension like traffic safety, fear of crime, social safety or accident safety. This is naturally done with different methods like surveys, interviews or mapping tasks.

According to the research literature of perceived safety, there is a clear paradox: perceived and actual safety do not always correlate. Although the actual safety level has improved a lot during the last decades in most countries, the level of perceived safety has simultaneously decreased. Often media has been blamed for this: the more media reports about crime and accidents, the wider audience becomes aware of them. An incident may happen in a specific context that has little to do with the contexts where the audience live. These people may react to the news with their own behavior although the original incident has nothing to do with their environment.

For an individual user of urban space the perceptions of safety are very real. They have an influence how the person behaves and uses urban space – or if they are too afraid use urban environment at all.

Other paradoxes of perceived safety

**Stranger
danger**



**Individual
victimization**

There is still another paradox in perceived safety, especially related to fear of crime. This relates to the fact that those who fear more – like older women – are statistically least likely to confront crime or problems. On the other hand, those who fear least, like young men, are most likely to get into problems. This is understandable because women feel more vulnerable and cannot as easily protect themselves.

Social fears have especially increased lately. Most often these fears are related to a potential threat from strangers in public space. In fact, public spaces have not become more unsafe or strangers more violent. Violence has rather increased in private spaces and the most likely the threat comes from people we know.

What makes you feel safe?



What makes you feel safe? Can you think of some social or physical characteristics that make you feel safe in urban environment?

We are naturally all different and do not feel environment in the same way. Therefore it is impossible to give an exhaustive list of things that promote the feeling of safety. In the picture there are things that have been shown in various studies to promote safety. There are both elements of social context like sense of community, stability, social control and helpfulness. Also physical environment characteristics can be important like good maintenance and lighting, human scale and the lack of signs of disorder.

If the living environment includes these elements, I am sure it helps keeping the spirits up – or even lightens the everyday life!

Safety planning



Integrated approach SOFTER safety planning

Jane Jacobs
Lively, diverse city with
strong sense of community



Segregated approach HARDER safety planning

Oscar Newman
Defensible space: controllable
neighbourhoods



Social constitution of fear

Hille Koskela
Critical social and political
aspects of fear

There are two main approaches in the research of perceived safety and the safety planning. These are the integrated and segregated approaches, the softer and harder approaches to safety planning if you wish. To create safe urban environment, the segregated approach suggests to a more controlled and closed city space. In contrast, the integrated approach relies on the enlivening and opening of public space.

In the segregated approach the access is controlled by surveillance systems and by strengthening the boundaries in urban environment. The gated community planning concept can be seen as quite an extreme application of this approach.

The integrated approach is based on the promotion of an open and assimilating urban environment and an increase of human presence and activity, which is believed to improve feelings of safety. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) concept has adopted elements from both of these approaches.

In addition to the two approaches above that concentrate on the links between physical characteristics of settings and perceived safety, there is still a third approach. Some scholars emphasize the complex interplay between the social and physical realms and argue that adopting a simple set of design solutions is not enough and we should not concentrate too much on built environment at the expense of social causes and the political nature of fear. This third approach, has been highlighted by studies based on the critical tradition of social science, in particular feminist research.

For us, who are interested in urban planning, perhaps the two first approaches are still

more interesting but we shouldn't forget the third approach either.

The various measures of safety planning

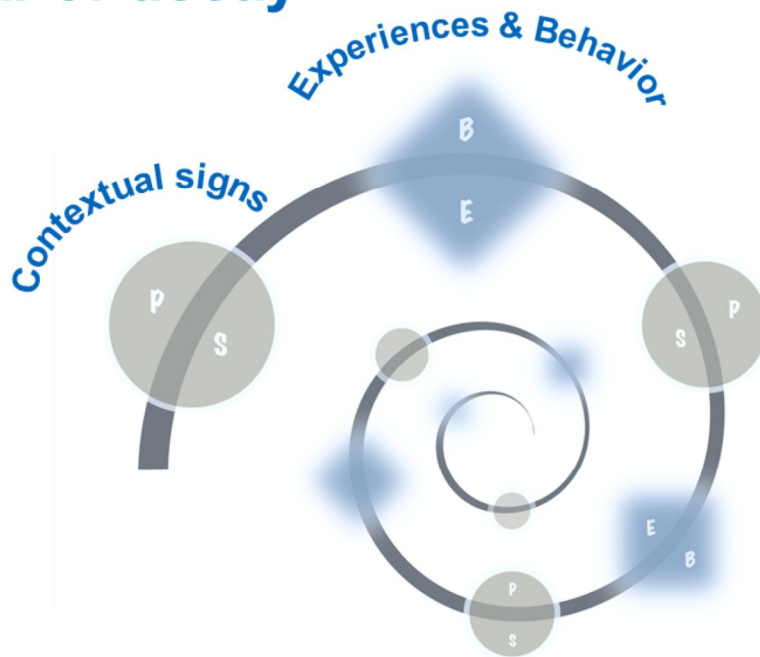
Integrated approach SOFTER safety planning	Segregated approach HARDER safety planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• mixed land use & higher densities• 24-hour city• stores and other public places on streets• encouraged use of public space• accessible smaller parks• open and inviting sidewalks• buildings overlooking the public space and entrances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• visible policing presence• CCTV surveillance• physical segregation• favouring private space• single-use neighborhoods• separation of land uses• using secure gates, barriers and other measures of access control• avoiding through pedestrian traffic• discouraging potentially disrupting forms of street life that can damage private property

The first two approaches suggest quite different concrete ways how to realize safety planning.

The softer safety planning suggests a variety of ways how to increase the active use of urban space, like stores on the street or inviting sidewalks. This is because the very presence of other people in urban space and the natural surveillance it bring along, is supposed to promote feelings of safety.

The harder safety planning approach encourages people to take control over their neighborhoods and intervene and report crime when it occurs. This is supported for example by using secure gates, barriers and other measures of access control.

The spiral of decay



In reality neighbourhoods are constantly changing. If we try to reveal the dynamics of perceived safety in a neighborhood that is under transition – like in the case of urban infill neighborhood – it is useful also to think about the temporal aspects of perceived safety. Here, the well-known conceptualization of 'the spiral of decay' is useful.

According to it, the temporal process starting from perceived signs of disorder leads first to increased perception of fear and reduced willingness to engage in neighborhood life, then encourages apathy and finally signals potential offenders that the neighborhood is an easy target for criminals. The figure summarizes this idea: the spiral of decay comprises of the continuous rotation between social, physical and contextual measures on the one hand and behavioral and experiential outcomes on the other. In the dynamic process, the current context inspires certain behavioral and experiential outcomes that on their part can influence the context, leading again to changes in the behavior and experiences of inhabitants.

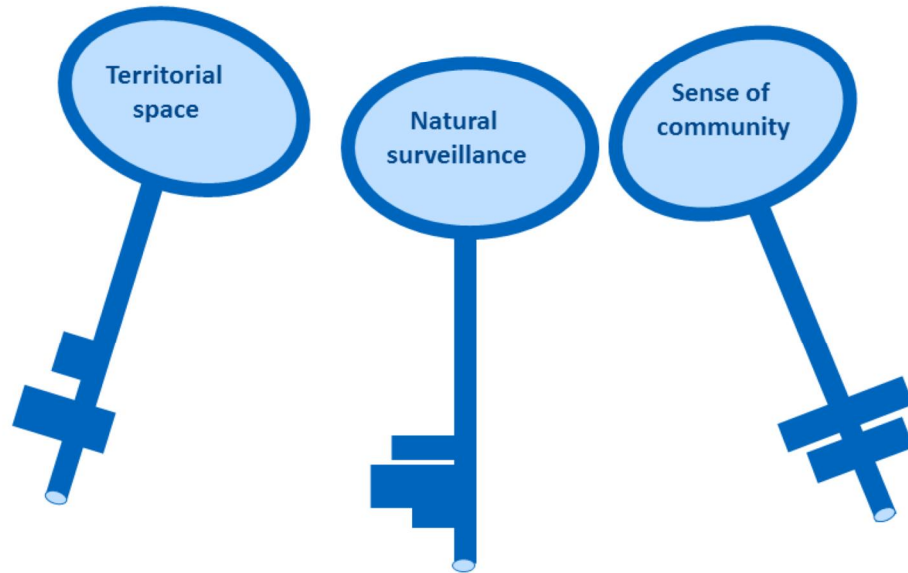
This kind of vicious circle can start rather easily and once it has started it is difficult to stop.

Example I: The perceived safety of Muotiala neighbourhood, City of Tampere



Let us now look at two examples from Finland. The first example concerns a neighbourhood called Muotiala in Tampere. This neighbourhood is – as far as I know – the only Finnish neighbourhood where the principles of safety planning have been taken as a starting point.

Keys of CPTED planning in Muotiala



In Muotiala the principles of CPTED planning were applied that is Crime prevention through Environmental Design.

In practise the safety planning in Muotiala can be summarized to three key factors: Territorial space means that the inhabitants feel that they control the space and it is clear who is responsible for each space. Natural surveillance means the eyes on the street – that common spaces are used actively and there are always other people around. Sense of community refers to the common activities of neighbours and shared responsibilities.

The borders between public, semipublic and private space



The location of storage places



Meeting places



Parking



Natural surveillance



So, the borders between public, semipublic and private space are clearly defined and there are meeting places. Natural surveillance is possible and it is easy to keep on eye on storage and parking places.

softGISsafety method

The screenshot displays the 'softGISsafety method' interface. At the top, the 'pehmoGIS' logo is on the left, and navigation icons for 'Ohje' (Help) and 'Keskeytä' (Cancel) are on the right. A progress bar shows 82% completion. The main area features a map of Muotiala with several red circular markers labeled with letters: 'Q', 'E', 'G', 'K', 'L', 'I', 'N', 'M', 'D', 'B', 'J', 'P', 'F', and 'A'. To the left of the map is a list of survey questions, each with a radio button. The questions are:

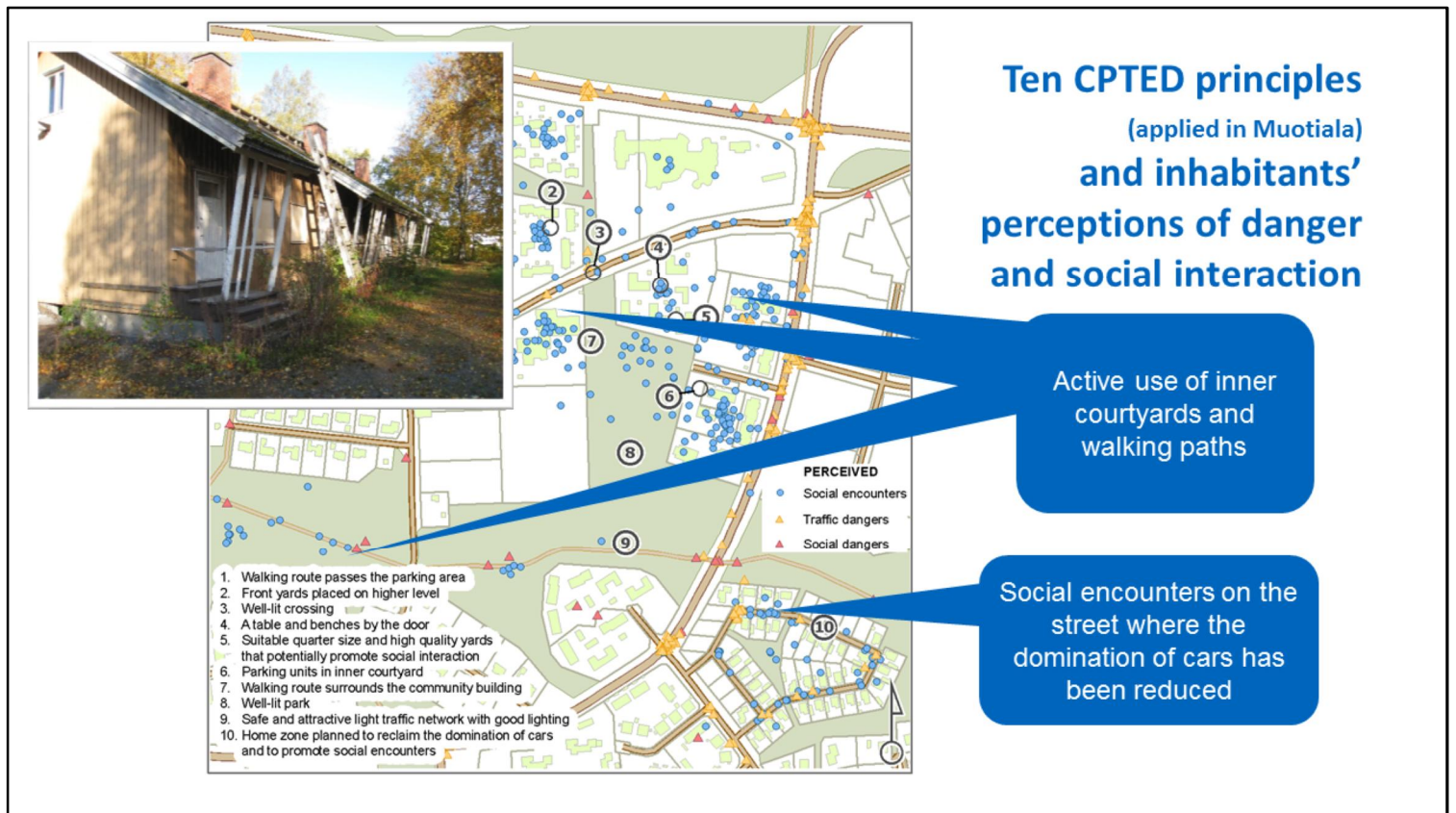
- Q Tallautunut polku
- E Ylikasvanut kasvillisuus
- G Graffiti
- G Juopotteilijoita
- K Siisti ympäristö
- L Hyvinhoidettuja istutuksia
- I Kaunis piha
- N Ulkoilevia aikuisia
- M Leikkiviä lapsia
- D Huono valaistus
- B Hylätty auto
- J Hyvinhoidettu piha / rakennus
- P Hyvä valaistus
- Hoitamaton piha / rakennus
- F Tyhjä tontti
- A Roskia

On the right side of the map, there are navigation controls: a plus sign for 'Lähennä' (Zoom In), a minus sign for 'Loitonna' (Zoom Out), and buttons for 'Muotialan kartta' and 'Tampereen kartta'. At the bottom, there are 'Takaisin' (Back) and 'Jatka' (Continue) buttons.

182 respondents
39% of all over 18-year-olds
72% of all households
living in the area

On this page both signs of
disorder and signs of
active use and care were
mapped

We wanted to study whether the inhabitants really feel safe in Muotiala. Therefore we arranged an online softGIS survey in Muotiala. This survey was participated by 182 respondents.



According to the results of the survey the safety planning principles applied in Muotiala really promoted the feelings of safety and active use of outdoor areas. In this map, both the realization of the design principles are shown on the map and also the results of the softGIS survey. For example, the inner courtyards were actively used by inhabitants. Also, a street that was designed to as a home zone actually promoted social encounters.

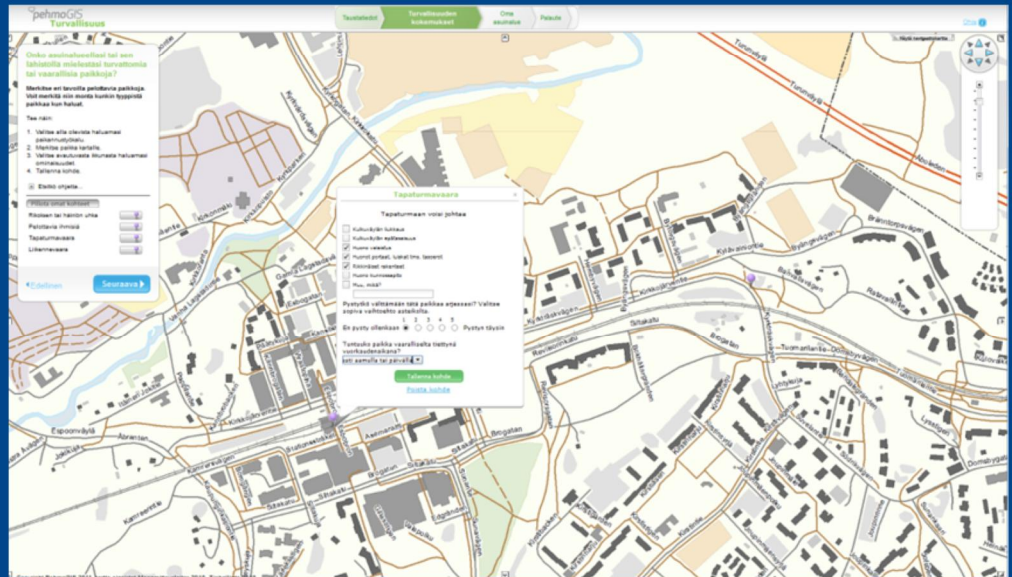
You may wonder why there are a lot of red markings on the left upper part of the map. Well, these mappings of social danger locate in a area that is not a part of the new Muotiala neighbourhood but an older area with rental apartments. The softGIS data also gives suggestions what could be done here: the lighting was not good and there were many signs of inadequate care and maintenance. If you apply the social constitution of fear approach, you might argue that perhaps the new "safe" middle class Muotiala residents tend to locate unpredictable and negative perceptions outside their own bird nest. Whatever your interpretation, now this area has unfortunately been demolished.

Let me tell one more thing about Muotiala case: it was interesting that in the marketing of the new area, the safety principles applied in the planning and design were not mentioned at all. This was because it was seen as antimarketing by housing companies: the potential home buyers would immediately ask "what is wrong about this area because safety has to be highlighted". "Is there a prison close by or what is wrong here?". In Finnish context we take safety as granted so perhaps this marketing strategy is understandable. Also the architects and developers involved in the project

said that the safety principles are not very special here in Muotiala. The same principles are applied always.

Example II: Perceived safety of an urban infill area (Espoo Kirkkojärvi)

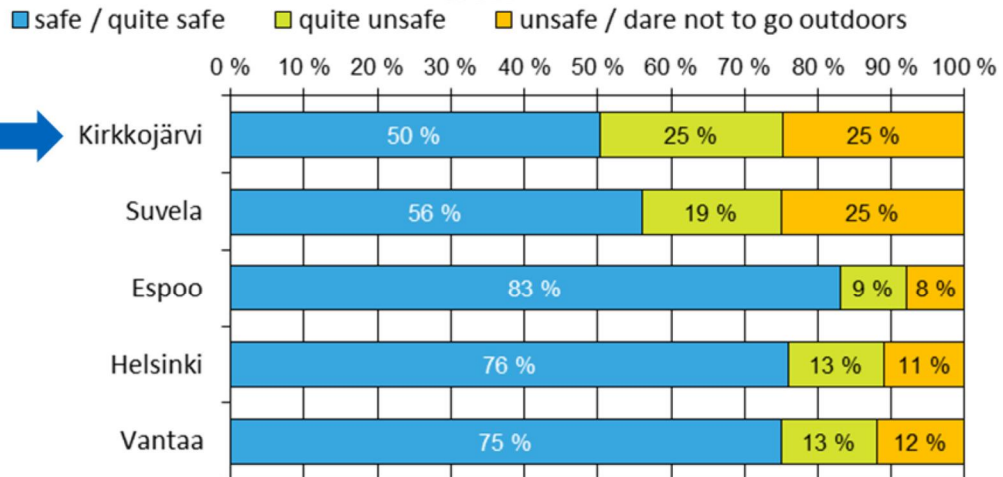
Autumn 2011
303 respondents



My second example is closer, from city of Espoo, the Kirkkojärvi area. There has been an urban infill project in the Eastern part of the area. So, we arranged a softGIS survey among about 300 inhabitants to study how the infill has affected the perceptions of safety of the area.

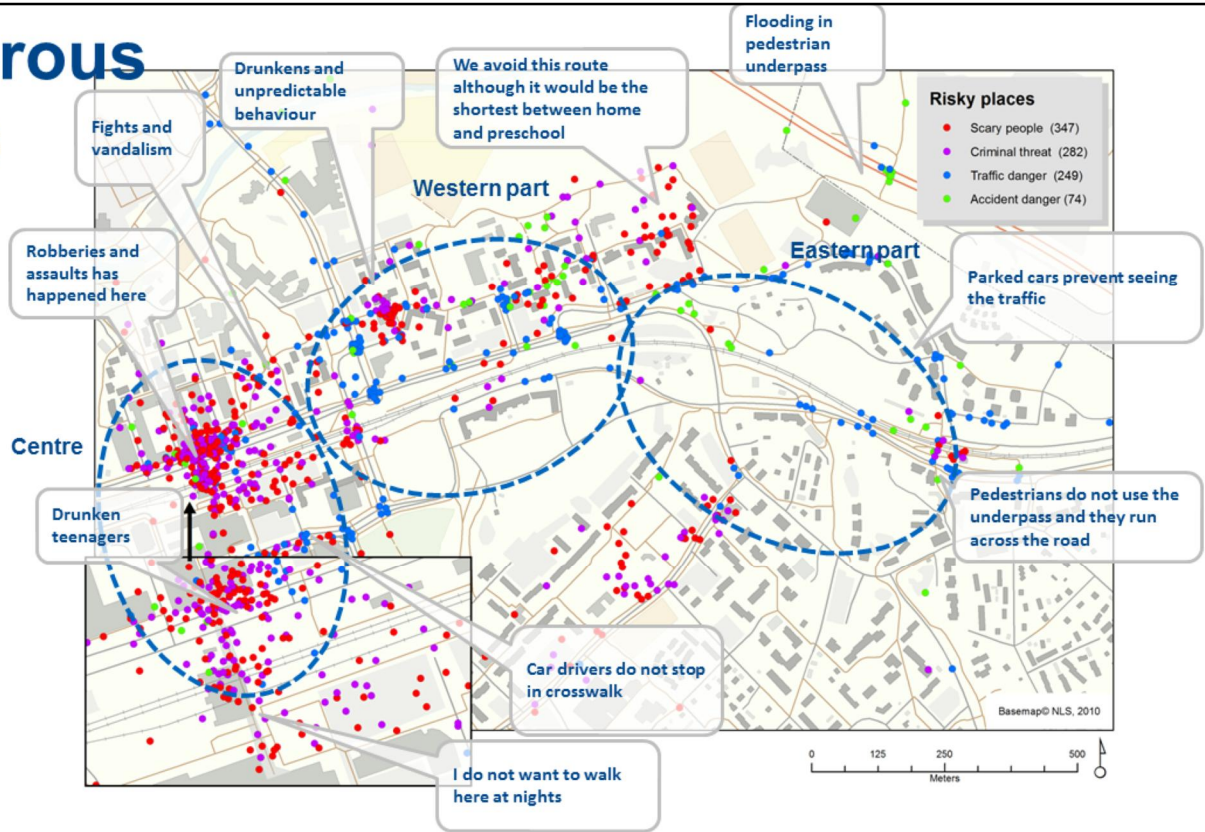
The study area compared to other areas

Perceived weekend evening safety in Kirkkojärvi and reference areas



To study urban safety here in Kirkkojärvi was justified because in earlier studies Kirkkojärvi area has been perceived clearly less safe than other areas in Espoo.

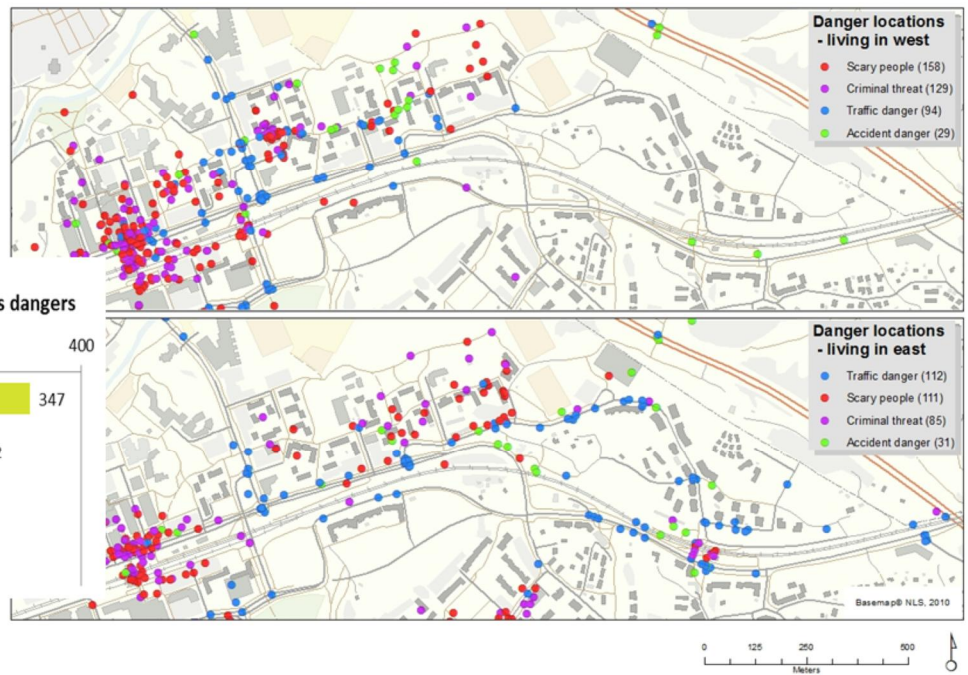
Dangerous places



So, we asked participants to map four types experiences of fear: scary people, criminal threat and traffic and accident danger.

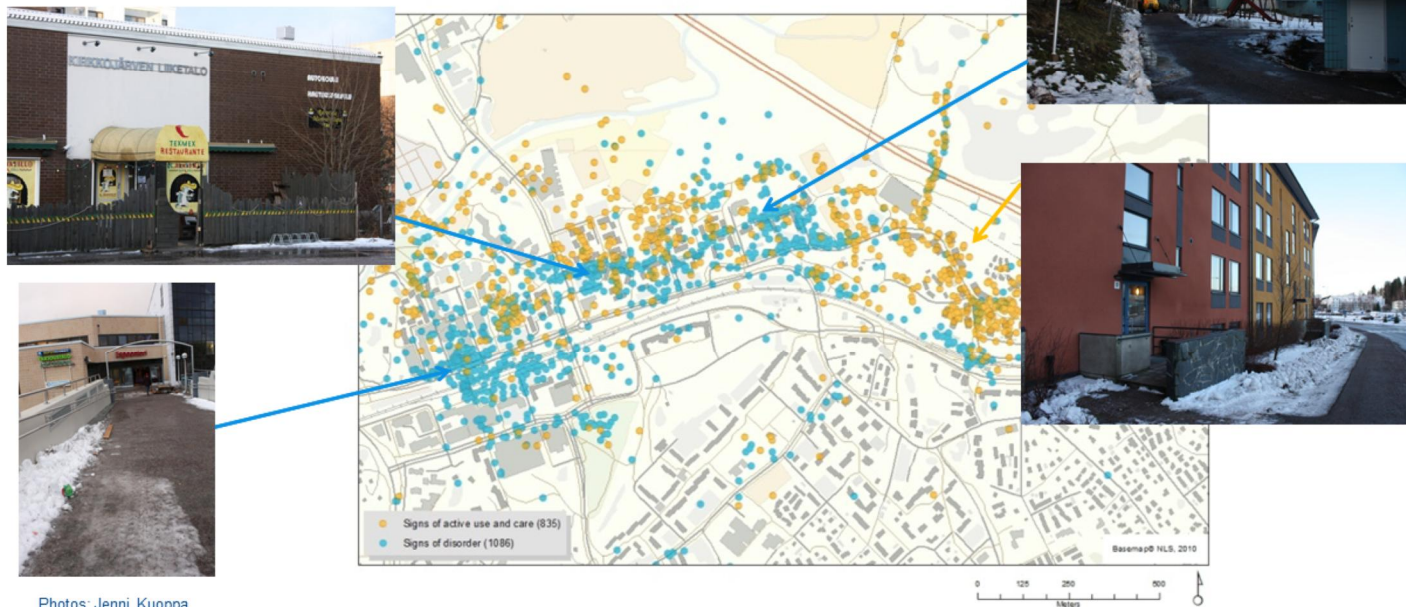
The first observation was that the three subareas, the centre, the older Western part and the Eastern infill area differed clearly in the markings of places of fear. The older areas, the Western part and the centre had a lot of this kind of markings while the new part was almost empty of them.

East-west comparison



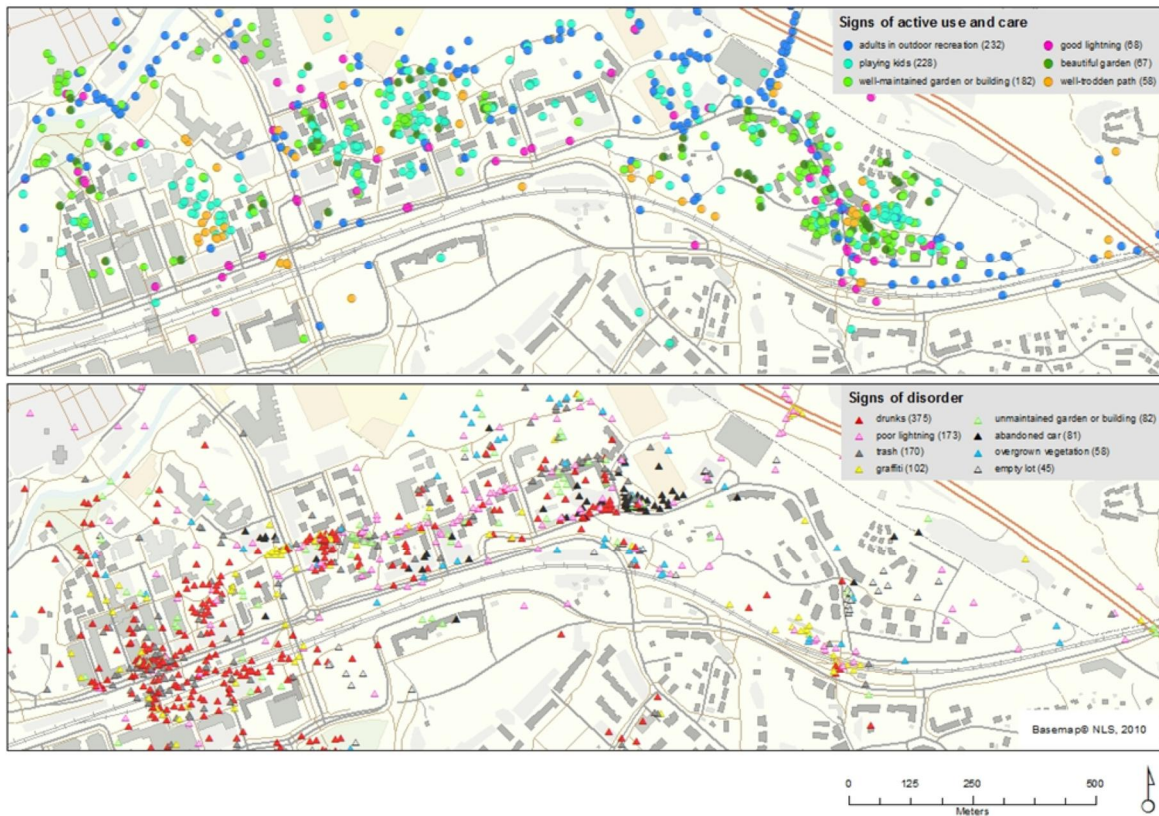
You can also take a closer look at the comparison between the Eastern and Western subareas. You notice that in the Western part there are very many markings of scary people and the few marking in the Eastern part are mostly related to traffic danger. If we look at the total number of various types of perceived danger, we can see that the social danger really was the most common category of markings and accident danger the least used category.

Signs of disorder and active use/care



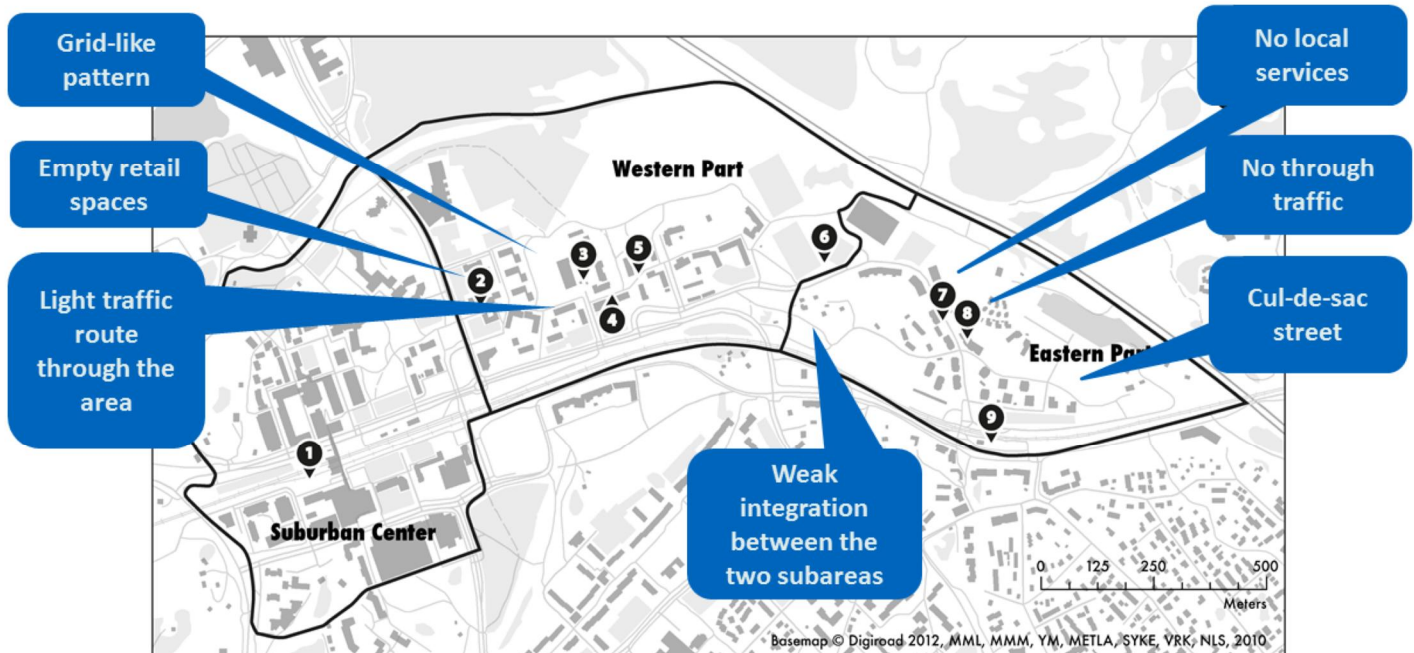
Photos: Jenni Kuoppa

Also negative signs of disorder were located very often to the older areas, especially to the centre of the neighbourhood. Positive signs of active care and use were very common in the new Eastern area but also quite common in the Western subarea.



Again, you can also look at these marking more closely by the Eastern and Western subareas. Besides getting a more detailed understanding about the type of positive and negative markings in subareas, you can also get a hint how to improve the Western subarea: in this area there are a lot of markings about bad lighting.

Urban structural characteristics in the sub-areas



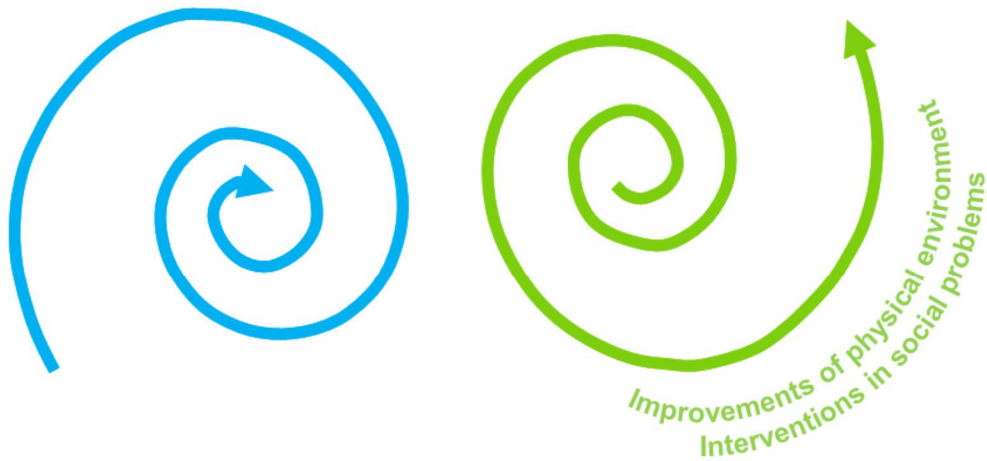
Let us finally look at the design and planning principles applied in the Western and Eastern subareas. Maybe they can explain at least partly the findings of our study.

Both areas represent roughly similar level of urban density but there are also structural differences: In the Western part the urban structure is based on grid-like pattern and there are some commercial services inside the residential block although the area is also close to the suburban center. In the Eastern part there are no local services and no through traffic. Instead of the grid-like pattern here there are cul-de-sac streets. Integration between the two areas is very weak.

The Eastern part that has very few signs of perceived danger represents quite clearly the segregated approach to neighborhood safety planning. If you remember this approach concretizes in single-use structure that avoids through traffic and supports rather the residential territorialization than open interaction. Although the new part is not gated, it is spatially separated. From the viewpoint of this new subarea alone, the planners have succeeded to produce a safe heaven but at the expense of connectivity, openness and liveliness. The Western, older, part has potentials described by integrated safety planning approach. However, inhabitants expressed remarkably more experiences of unsafety. This can partly be related to the aged and deteriorating physical environment of this subarea and many perceivable signs of disorder. Following the line of thinking of the social constitution approach of fear, larger socioeconomic issues probably play a crucial role here too. We should also

notice that both the center and Western parts were also commented positively and there were many sign of active use of the areas. Some researchers argue that some conflicts and negative perceptions are inevitable by-products of vivid interaction between neighbors. This may be the case here too.

Turning the spiral of decay to a positive cycle of development



Our latter example was showing that the potential of infill project to change the track of development of a distressed neighborhood was clearly missed in Kirkkojärvi area in Espoo. The negative spiral of decay was not – at least yet – turned to a more positive one in the problematic older parts of the neighbourhood. Even if the average perceptions of the area became more positive after the infill project, the polarization was obvious.

It would have been wise to invest to the renovations of the older parts simultaneously with the building of the new part. Even now it would not be too late to try to turn the cycle of development. Improvements of physical environment, interventions into the social problems and multi-stakeholder collaboration could still have a significant impact.

Lastly:

This lecture has been all about ways to plan and develop safe urban environments. It is, nevertheless, important to remember that urban environments cannot be totally purified from tensions or unpredictable, sometimes chaotic events without killing it's true spirit. Therefore, the safety perspective should be just one among others in the development of urban spaces.