

Emplotting Urban Regeneration: Narrative Strategies in the Case of Kalasatama, Helsinki

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ABSTRACT

Recent decades have seen an increasing interest in the narrative and rhetorical structure of urban planning. Urban districts take shape based on words as much as on concrete. Narrative elements such as rhetorical figures, storylines and plot structures are relevant not only for the way in which a particular planned area is presented to the general public or framed within local policy discourse, but also for the way in which larger visions of an urban future translate into concrete developments within the built environment.

This paper examines the planning of Kalasatama (Helsinki), an ongoing case of urban regeneration, by applying methods and concepts from narrative and literary theory to the analysis of planning documents, marketing, and media narratives. A key concern is the manner in which planning documents “emplot” a new area, both literally singling out an area within a geographical setting, and framing the development within a “plot”, a story with a specific dynamics and morality. Character, plot and metaphor will constitute the key narrative concepts. This paper draws on the burgeoning field of narrative planning theory, with the specific aim to make concepts from narrative and literary theory more compatible with existing theoretical frameworks from planning theory.

Keywords: emplotment, Kalasatama, narrative, urban planning

1. INTRODUCTION

Argumentation and story-telling have always been an intricate part of planning and policy, but in recent decades, narrative has increasingly become explicitly used as an instrument to give coherence to the often contradictory functioning of cities and their development. The “story turn” (Sandercock 2010) in urban planning has led to a broadening scope in terms of planning methods and practices, but also to an increasing complexity in research methodology. Narrative elements such as rhetorical figures, storylines and plot structures have become ever more relevant not only for the way in which a particular planned area is presented to the general public or framed within local policy discourse, but also for the way in which larger visions of an urban future translate into concrete developments within the built environment.

This paper applies methods and concepts from narrative and literary theory to the analysis of planning documents, marketing, and media narratives. It will look, specifically, at the narratives of planning in Kalasatama, Helsinki, an ongoing case of urban regeneration. The primary sources will consist of planning documents such as the commentary to the partial master plan, as well as less formal texts disseminated by the planning department and its partners, such as web sites with background information.

A key concern will be the manner in which planning documents “emplot” a new area, both literally singling out an area within a geographical setting, and framing the development within a “plot”, a story with its specific dynamics and morality, and drawing on specific sets of rhetorical strategies. This paper will draw on the burgeoning field of narrative planning theory (cf. Beauregard 2005; Sandercock 2010), with the specific aim to make concepts from narrative and literary theory more compatible with existing theoretical frameworks from planning theory.

The Kalasatama area currently under development is part of a grand overhaul of Helsinki’s post-industrial waterfront. Located due north-east of the Helsinki centre, this former container harbour is being redeveloped into a working and living environment for 8000 jobs and 20 000 inhabitants. Construction started in 2011 and is set to be finished in the 2030s. Important factors in the area’s development have been the opening of the metro station by the same name in 2007, the redevelopment of the former gas works site Suvilahti, immediately adjacent to Kalasatama, into a cultural centre (see Krivy 2013), and the creative temporary use of the site (Hernberg 2012).

The narrative aspects of planning Kalasatama have been repeat-

edly emphasized by actors within the planning department. The official website of the Kalasatama project claims that “Kalasatama has a co-written tale, which took form together with co-operation partners” (Hk 2015c, see Hk 2014b), thus explicitly framing the development as part of a narrative produced in partnership. Following this statement, the website argues that the “new Kalasatama district will be built with all due respect to the various layers of the area’s past, while nurturing continuity” (ibid.). From the perspective of a narrative analysis of planning, these are revealing claims, shedding light on how the development sees itself – or wants to be seen – as engaged in storytelling, as a curator of sorts of (earlier) local stories. It is a claim that reflects the “story turn” (Cohen 2008) in contemporary urban planning, and the extent to which contemporary planning is considered as a form of storytelling.

2. NARRATIVE AND URBAN PLANNING

In urban planning theory, the interest in narrative, visible especially since the early 1990s onwards, has a variety of methodological roots. It tends to be associated with a Foucauldian interest in discourse, storylines and argumentation (Boyer 1983; Fischer & Forester 1993; Hajer 1993, 2006) and with the post-Habermasian attentiveness to the way language shapes human interaction, including planning and policy. The study of rhetorical devices is one possible way of examining how such stories are used and adapted in the context of urban planning (Throgmorton 1993, 1996; see also Myerson & Rudin 1996). Argumentation, discourse and storyline are some of the concepts that have been applied to examine how planners shape a vision of a specific locality as part of a political and cultural dialogue with other actors. Bringing in an awareness of narrative into planning theory and practice has been seen as a way to facilitate dialogue between various actors in planning that has been sought in recent research on consensus building (Innes & Booher 2010), collaborative planning (Healey 1998), and the idea of the planner as deliberative practitioner (Forester 1999). Patsy Healey has poignantly assessed how the work of contemporary planners is currently described in terms of story-writing, creating new kinds of challenges:

In many parts of the world, governance elites are trying to write new stories for their cities, to inscribe these stories in the identities of the key players upon whose actions the core relations of a city depend and to incorporate them into the practices of an urban governance which stretches beyond the town hall to a wide range of people in-

volved in governance in one way or another. *The challenge for planners is to reconstruct their own ways of thinking and acting to provide creative resources for critiquing and facilitating this work of city story-writing.* (Healey 2000, 527-528; my emphasis)

The schooling and conceptual apparatus available to urban planners, however, seems to have left this profession somewhat ill-equipped to embark upon the kind of work of “city story writing” envisioned by Healey. So far, research questions of narratives *as* narrative within planning discourse, and based on narrative or literary theory, have had relatively limited impact on the study of narratives in planning. Few scholars working on narrative urban theories have let themselves be inspired by narrative theory (see, however, Keunen & Verraest 2012, Walter 2013). This is the more striking given the notable expansion of studies of narrative in the humanities and in the social sciences.

During the last decades, theorists within literary studies and the social sciences have developed models with which to adapt narratological concepts (often drawing on literary studies) to narratives other than literary texts, such as biographies, media narratives, patient diaries, to name but a few examples (see e.g. Bruner 1991; Nünning & Nünning 2010; Nünning 2010). A more concerted effort to map and analyse the use and structures of narratives in planning could benefit from recent advances in comparative literary studies, narratology, as well as recent research in sociology and self-narratives. Concepts from narrative theory could bring new insights into the field of urban planning theory, which has arguably been struggling to develop conceptual frameworks with which to coherently incorporate discursive practices and paradigms, and in particular, to replace totalizing master narratives with a subtle treatment of “small”, local narratives (see Knieling & Othengrafen, 2009; Sandercock, 2010). In what follows, emplotment and metaphor will be proposed as two key narrative concepts with which to examine narratives of planning (such as media narratives of a planning area and its developments) and narratives in planning (the planning narratives in official planning documents, for example in commentaries to local master plans).

3. EMPLOTMENT

Emplotment is proposed here as a first central concept for approaching narratives in urban development, not in the least because of the concept’s semantic double-entendre, encapsulating the meanings of both

spatial “plot” (location) and narrative “plot” (narrative intrigue). The use of “emplotment” as a narrative concept outside the field of literary studies is primarily associated with the work of Hayden White and his examination of historiography in terms of their narrative. White used “emplotment” to denote the processes by which events are contextualized into meaning-making totalities, receiving “the formal coherency that only stories can possess” (White 1981, 19). Drawing on the work of Northrop Frye, White distinguishes four “modes of emplotment”: romance, tragedy, comedy and satire. In planning theory, Hayden White’s examination of narrative tropes within historiography has been applied in re-examining planning histories (Kramsch 1998), and its usefulness for an analysis of urban planning has been illustrated by Mareile Walter’s examination of narratives of Karlskrona (2013).

What interests me here most is emplotment as narrative strategy that situates a specific event or events within a larger narrative framework, giving sense, structure, coherency and causality to what otherwise would remain a mere enumeration of actions. Especially when considering non-fictional texts that bear little resemblances to literary narratives, such as policy documents, the analysis of a text’s emplotment strategies – in other words, of how narrative elements direct the reader towards a coherent plot – would seem to be a particularly beneficial method. Unlike texts of literary fiction, few planning documents have strong authorial voice, explicit plot lines or distinct character dynamics. All planning narratives, however, will exhibit some thematic, linguistic and stylistic features that situate the planning area on a geographical map and within a narrative intrigue. These narrative strategies carry out what the literary theorists Paul Ricoeur has called the “mise en intrigue” or “situating into plot”, an “operation that draws a configuration out of a simple succession” (Ricoeur 1984/1990, 65, see also Kaplan 1993, 172).

Narrative beginnings are of singular importance in enacting “emplotment”, and in introducing the recipient of the narrative to a specific setting that is embedded in an (often intuitively recognizable) framework of plot, with its own logic and moral. Like endings, beginnings provide a sense of direction to the reader. What Yuri Lotman claims of endings goes equally for compelling beginnings: that they attest “not only to the conclusion of some plot, but also to the construction of the world as a whole” (Lotman 1977, 216; see also Uyttenhove, Keunen & Ameel 2016).

I have argued elsewhere that, in particular in opening settings of city novels, spatial descriptions of a city tend to reverberate also with a moral and social (in some cases also clearly outlined gendered/ethnic)

geography (Ameel 2015). What is at stake is a matter of double “employment”: of placing a “plot”, a location, on the map, and simultaneously preparing the reader for a causal sequence of events to unfold. Beginnings have been described as carrying something of the prophetic, which has led Edward Said (following Hayden White) to describe the illusions conjured by a beginning as “inaugural gestures” (Said 1973, 192). The kind of decisive employment carried out in the beginning of a narrative could be called “inaugural employment”, the prophetic, forward-looking teleological manner of positioning a spatial-temporal node (such as in our case, the development of Kalasatama) within a larger, coherent narrative.

4. SITUATING KALASATAMA WITHIN A PLOT

How is the “inaugural employment” of Kalasatama carried out in planning documents? The opening paragraphs of the commentary to the partial local master (in Finnish: “osayleiskaavan selostus”), one of the most crucial planning documents, are a case in point. One would hardly expect a flight of the rhetorical imagination in the opening sections of this kind of document, which is bound to follow a largely predetermined structure. The opening sections of the commentary are intended to locate the development area in a sequence of sections entitled, respectively, “location of the development area” (“suunnittelualueen sijainti”), “framing the development area” (“suunnittelualueen rajaus”) and “background” (“tausta”).

The opening setting of the partial local master plan of Kalasatama begins with the one-sentence description under the heading “Location of the development area”: “The development area is located in the eastern coastal area of the Helsinki city centre (“kantakaupunki”), north of the Long Bridge.” (HKS 2008, 4, my emphasis) Two rhetorical arguments are made in this opening sentence. First, the area is located within the “city centre”, which is a rhetorical argument concerning the relationship between development area and the overall city, rather than a factual statement. Second, the foregrounding of the spatial marker “north of the Long Bridge”, in the very first sentence of this defining document, is particularly intriguing. “North of the Long Bridge” is not only fairly imprecise, it is first and foremost a social and cultural-historical marker, rather than a strictly geographical marker (see Ameel 2014, 161-163). Situating this area “north of the Long Bridge” places it on a social and cultural map with blue-collar roots, associated with the historical working-class districts like Kallio and Sörnäinen.



Figure 1. The area of Kalasatama as shown in the local master plan documentation. The “Long Bridge” referred to in the plan is not even visible in the photograph, being situated to the south-west of the area. Source: Hksv 2008

The link with Helsinki’s blue-collar cultural history is further strengthened in the opening of the chapter “The development phases of the area”, which begins with painting a picture of a divided city, in which the eastern part (where Kalasatama is situated) is described as distinctly blue-collar: “Helsinki has traditionally been socially divided in two. The labourers and the industry were from the beginning situated in the eastern and south-western parts of the city centre, whereas the western parts had been the mainstay of the bourgeoisie and administration” (HKSv 2008, 5). While there is indisputably some truth in this statement, several questions are raised by it. The first question, of course,

is why this story is foregrounded; the second point is that this story could be told in completely different terms, too. The east-west divide of Helsinki, while historically not entirely inaccurate, is also both contentious and rhetorical. The oldest part of the centre, containing the biggest concentration of power (Kruununhaka), is situated *east* of the central railway station; the area immediately *east* of present-day Kalasatama, Kulosaari, has long been an upper (middle) class stronghold; in the late nineteenth century, the *western* parts of Helsinki did contain industry (such as an iconic sugar factory), undeveloped wastelands (much of present-day Töölö), and working class slums (the villas of Eläintarha/Töölönlahti).

Foregrounding this particular story of Helsinki's cultural and social divide is part of a larger rhetorical strategy to link the area to the largely gentrified (or gentrifying) axis Kallio/Arabia, renowned for grass-root artistic projects, creative industries, and booming housing prices. This link is accomplished partly through stealth (such as in the rhetorical opening positioning the area in working class Helsinki), and partly explicitly, when the partial local master plan places the location of Kalasatama both within range of the "science-art industry axis" towards the Arabia and Viikki areas, and in terms of commercial importance, as part of the extension of the city centre (HKS 2008, 19).

In describing the characteristics that historically define Kalasatama, literary narratives, too, are used to strengthen the emplotment of the project area within a narrative of Helsinki's social geography and its development. Hannu Asikainen, project manager of Kalasatama, mentions "Kjell Westö's stories" which "largely are situated on the shore and in the history of Sörnäinen's waterfront" (Valli 2012, 12) as a cultural background for the area. The endeavour to emplot the "story of Kalasatama" within a Helsinki literature describing the eastern city centre is, however, again a highly selective procedure. This is, first of all, selective in linking the author Kjell Westö to Sörnäinen. Westö is much more renowned as the writer of north-western Helsinki (Munkkiniemi and surroundings, in particular), and has, moreover, in his novels covered most of central Helsinki's topography. Second, it is striking, again, that the link between Kalasatama and Sörnäinen is sought, rather than the links between Kalasatama and other regions (such as Kulosaari, Arabia, or Vallila).

The key storyline into which the various narrative strategies emplot Kalasatama's development is the development of Kalasatama as an integral part of the city centre, a distinctly "urban" district, with close links (also culturally and historically) to the gentrifying, "creative" districts in the north-eastern parts of the city centre. In the strategic

plan of the Helsinki region, the projected identity of Kalasatama is argued to consist of “industrial and labour history and the positive image factors of the neighbouring area of Kallio, which are, for example, urban life, tolerance and urbanity” (HKSV 2009, 28). The focus on the close attachment to the city centre is constructed both in physical and mental terms. Descriptions of the area’s future functioning, as found in planning and media narratives, all strengthen the employment of the area’s development within a narrative of inclusion into the urban fold of the city centre. In planning documents, inclusion in the centre is repeatedly emphasized (HKSV 2008, 19), as is the “urbanity” of the area (ibid. 24), also in terms of traffic solutions (ibid. 26), type of parks (ibid. 36) and the urban morphology of its built environment (ibid. 40).

5. METAPHOR: “IN THE ARMPIT OF THE CITY”

Metaphors further strengthen the sense of Kalasatama as being emplotted within the larger narrative of the expansion of Helsinki’s core centre, an expansion that is (or so the plot implies) carried out in terms of its function (distribution of services and commercial activities), morphology (building height, building block structure) and mental cartography. Emphasizing the importance of rhetorical figures of speech, and referring to the work of Rein and Schön, Fischer and Forrester have argued that problem-setting stories in policy documents tend to be constructed around “generative metaphors”, linking “casual accounts of policy problems to particular proposals for action” and connecting “accounts of ‘is’ and ‘ought’” (Fischer and Forester 1993, 11). Similarly, and drawing on Ricoeur, Kaplan has argued that metaphors “have the ability to bring together what at first seem ‘distant’ into something ‘close’” (Kaplan 1993, 172). In the contemporary urban planning visions of Kalasatama, metaphor is indeed what bridges the gap between the existing present and the imagined future, concretizing in language the changes envisioned in planning. Most important of all, metaphors – and other rhetorical devices – are drawn upon when a factual, down-to-earth wording is missing, when both author(s) and reader(s) are called upon to take a flight of imagination in order to make sense of what is being described. Metaphors are the language of epistemological uncertainty, and coincide with the coining of new meanings.

A first, surprising metaphor with which Kalasatama has been advertised in a range of websites, brochures and media reports, is that of the development area as being situated in the “armpit of the city” (see for example Wilska 2012). The fact that the metaphor doesn’t translate

well (in the Finnish original [“*kainalossa*”], it doesn’t sound unsavoury in the least) hints at the culture- and language-specific manner in which metaphors such as these function. In the English translation used in the official leaflet, the slogan “in the armpit of the city centre”, is translated as “Culture and life close to the heart of the city” (Hk 2014a), which retains, but transforms, the original body metaphor.

The metaphor implies a close and intimate relationship between this new development area and the city centre. There is a sense of cosiness and intimacy, as if the district in question is envisioned as cuddling up to the warm body of the city. Neither of these associations is entirely innocent: the conceptualization of the city as body is a metaphorization with a long tradition in city writing and urban studies. In the early modern period, it heralded rational ways and new technical innovations in thinking of circulation and control in cities (Sennett 1994, 263-264). It re-entered urban planning thinking in the early twentieth century in the work of Patrick Geddes, and again in the so-called systems view of planning, which became dominant in the English-speaking world from the 1960s onwards (Taylor 1998, 62). In literary fiction, it has also been consistently associated with a moralizing view of the city, and of the capital or metropolis, in particular, as the “body politic” and a mirror of society at large (see Williams 1973, 146).

If the idea of the city as body is thus far from innocent, so is the idea of Kalasatama as cuddling up to the city centre. As argued above, metaphors are used when more precise wordings are at large, and the use of this particular metaphor points at one of the central challenges involved in developing Kalasatama: how to define this area and its position vis-à-vis the centre? Is this to be a village-like new city district with an entirely new identity? Or merely one of the many sleeper districts along the metro line? Or is it an extension of the city centre? Choosing a particular storyline is not simply an issue of city branding. Particular narratives will have practical and material repercussions: they will be instrumental in guiding norms and visions in terms of projected building heights, street width, and the number of square metres allocated to local services and shop functions.

The naturalizing metaphor of a district cuddling up to the warm body of the centre emphasizes the organic aspect of the area and its relationship with the centre, perhaps as counterweight to Kalasatama’s present reality of what looks in many respects like a post-industrial ground zero, with no trees and very little nature. It conjures associations with restoring a sense of naturalness and wholeness to the area’s post-industrial environment that is being transformed into a densely-built urban environment. The employment of this area as a natural

environment is carried out also with the help of two other metaphors evoked in the same promotional text, although the implications are somewhat different. Kalasatama, which is first introduced in terms of a “lagoon to my taste”, is further described in a number of evocative terms:

Kalasatama is all about doing things together; it’s an ecosystem for all of us. Located a stone’s throw from the cultural offerings of Suvilahti and always within striking distance of the delicacies of Tukkuutori market, Kalasatama is everything a bold pioneer could wish for!

The Kalasatama forerunners look out to sea, as they always have. The sun will soon rise upon the majestic towers of the Kalasatama Centre, the skyscrapers of this pocket-sized metropolis. (Hk 2015c, see also Hk 2014b)

The first metaphor of interest is that of the “lagoon”, which evokes images of a pastoral, exotic and natural environment, in which man can recreate a new and wholesome relationship with nature. The second metaphor sets this pastoral imagery in further perspective: the new inhabitants of Kalasatama are described as “settlers” and “forerunners” (or, following the Finnish original, “pioneers”), transposing the national-romantic imagery of a Finnish “frontier myth”, evoked in literary classics such as Väinö Linna’s *Under the North Star* (1959, 1960, 1962) to an urban setting. The implication is that of a spatial *tabula rasa*, the fiction of a virginal space. However, as Robert Beauregard shrewdly points out, “[p]laces are never empty” (2005, 54), and planning tends to involve a “form of discursive displacement”, in which “[p]lanners and designers substitute a professional narrative for a multitude of shared histories, collective remembrances, and personal experiences”. Kalasatama’s emptiness implied by the reference to a pioneer and settler spirit can be argued as being one of the strategies to prepare the ground for grand schemes with little or no grounding in the area’s past, such as the “majestic towers” of the Kalasatama Centre, which – as will be seen – has been renamed since.

Similar to the metaphor of the city as body, natural metaphors, such as that of the “lagoon”, are not without their moral and political implications. Zygmunt Bauman has traced the implications of natural metaphors, such as that of the garden, in legitimizing processes of exclusion, of “weeding out” otherness (1991; see also Pinder 2005, 50). Tim Cresswell has come to similar conclusions in his discussion of metaphors in (social and cultural) geography related to nature and the

body: “[b]ehind the weed (and seed) metaphor lies the ugly history of the more generally organismic metaphor, *city as ecosystem*. [...] The *city as ecosystem* is not just theoretically inappropriate; it is a way of acting which has serious consequences in people’s lives” (Cresswell 1997, 336).

6. DIVERGING NARRATIVES OF KALASATAMA

In addition to the narratives in planning and those commenting upon the planning proper, a number of other stories and visions are told of Kalasatama, narratives that are involved more with the area as a social or mental construct, and relating to the ways in which services and cultural activities are going to be planned and organized. Within the limits of this article, these can only be referred to in passing, but they illustrate the extent to which the development of one specific area can give rise to a variety of (potentially conflicting) narratives. The first of these parallel narratives is that of Kalsatama as a “smart city” – a narrative that is mostly detached from the plans for the built environment and infrastructure proper, and deals primarily with questions of services, social media and the use of information technology. It projects Kalasatama as “a model district of smart city development”, aiming to “develop services and solutions for improving liveability, to seek new operating models and to offer a growth platform for new enterprises” (Hk 2014a; see Hk 2015a, Fiksu 2015). While narratives in planning documents emphasized the inclusion of Kalasatama within the fold of the city centre, the concept of Kalasatama as a “smart city” puts more emphasis on the image of Kalasatama as a closed, interconnected community. Similarly, the various art projects carried out in Kalasatama, and mostly coordinated by the Esku Performance Centre under the umbrella of “Kalasataman taidetalkoot” (“Kalasatama’s joint art project”) would seem to have as one of their primary goals to strengthen the sense of community, performing a “placemaking” operation through cultural activities (Eskus 2015). Both Kalasatama’s smart city project and the art project by Eskus emphasize the active cooperation between city, inhabitants and companies, supporting the idea of a Kalasatama narrative that is “created in cooperation” and told in a spirit of togetherness.

The most conspicuous parallel narratives related to Kalasatama are those centred on the building and planning of the commercial centre of Kalasatama. Originally called simply “Kalasatama Centre”, the development has been renamed “REDI” following considerable marketing efforts. On official websites, the name “Redi” is explained as an old



Figure 2: REDI publicity tower in Kalasatama, Helsinki. Picture by the author.

slang word for “roadstead” or sheltered waters off a coastline. Few Finns, however, would recognize this word or its maritime references, and the most logical implication is a Finnish spelling of the English “ready”. Linguistically, it is a hybrid term, easily misunderstood. The project itself, comprising 60 000 square metres, referred to as a “hybrid between a shopping mall and a city centre” (Srv-redi 2015) will include several of Helsinki’s first skyscrapers. In media coverage and marketing, narratives of this largely commercial venture have recently been overshadowing Kalasatama. Not Kalasatama, but REDI has now been referred to in media and promotional narratives as the “largest urban building project in Finland” (Redi 2015). Similar to narrative strategies to exploit Kalasatama, REDI makes use of the metaphor of the city (district) as body, implying by means of this rhetorical device the central role it will play as Kalasatama’s defining identity-marker. REDI is referred to by the project manager and by the official website of the Helsinki planning department as the “heart” of Kalasatama and as the “landmark of the eastern city centre” (Redi 2015).

On the ground in Kalasatama, too, REDI has staked out its share of Kalasatama. One of the promotional strategies is a conspicuous publicity tower dominating the northern gateway into Kalasatama,

advertising the “largest shopping mall in the city centre”. By contrast, references to the toponym Kalasatama or to the area’s distinctive identity are less visible in the linguistic landscape (for example in signs in the environment).

In several respects, the narratives and metaphors used in relation to REDI diverge from the emplotment of Kalasatama in planning narratives. Whereas planning documents emplotted a development of Kalasatama that oriented itself towards the city centre, as a natural extension of the urban fabric, the emplotment of REDI focuses on the maximal commercial exploitation of the area’s location, and contains several suburban or anti-urban narrative strains. In scale and in distribution of commercial activities, the commercial centre with its cluster of skyscrapers runs counter to the vision that the Helsinki planning department has of the urban characteristics of Helsinki’s city centre, both in terms of ideal building height (five to seven storeys, see HKSV 2008, 5), and in terms of preferred small-scale street-level commercial facilities. Kalasatama’s key narratives, that of its projected “urbanity” and that of its perceived location in, or close to, the city centre (traditionally not the location of shopping malls), were no deterrents to constructing this shopping centre, in which “the commercial activities of Kalasatama will be concentrated” (Hk 2015b).

A telling feature of the manner in which REDI is being emplotted within a larger narrative of urban development that is not looking inward, towards the city centre, but outward, towards the suburban fringe, is the imagined view inhabitants will have from the top floors from the towers, as envisioned by the image on the publicity tower. Panoramic vistas are associated with a sense of cognitive power, and with the possibility of giving a sense of coherent meaning to landscape (de Certeau 1984). The view suggested in the advertisement is not one of the city, but of the natural environments due east from Kalasatama. It is reminiscent of the promotional strategies used in of the most well-known examples of Finnish post-war suburban development, Tapiola, which was advertised as an evocation of a Finnish national-romantic landscape in a suburban context.

7. CONCLUSION

Narratives in planning documents, in media (and other) coverage of planning development, and in texts disseminated by private actors involved in planning, make use of narrative strategies that “emplot” an area and its development. This involves a double process of locat-



Figure 3. “Beautiful landscape apartments”, with an artist image of a view of the eastern Helsinki waterscape, evoking images of the lakes of inner Finland. Picture by the author.

ing a set of events within a geographical location, as well as within a narrative intrigue. Metaphor is one of the key rhetorical devices used to direct emplotment. In the case of Kalasatama, planning narratives make efforts to link the area’s development culturally and historically to Helsinki’s north-eastern historical working-class districts, and aim to project the development of the area within the narrative of an expansion of the city centre, both in terms of its built environment and in terms of its functions. Metaphors used in the promotional texts disseminated by the city further embrace this narrative in terms of a natural extension of the city. Other forms of emplotment in parallel narratives, however, show counter-currents in the way the development of Kalasatama is envisioned. Some of these emphasize the area’s future identity as a closed, interconnected pioneer community connected by information technology innovations. A particular case is that of the emplotment carried out by narrative strategies used in relation to Kalasatama’s centre REDI. Time will tell how these partially competing narratives will transform into the built and lived environment of the future Kalasatama, and to what extent the vision of a district in the “urban” fold of the city centre, including small-scale storefront businesses, is compatible what the construction of a large shopping centre explicitly envisioned to become the “heart” of the area.

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