

## PLANNING AND SPATIAL JUSTICE IN THE CITY

### The School and Refugee Reception Centre as sites of resistance in the contemporary multi-ethnic city

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#### Abstract

Of late, spatial justice in the city has been receiving increasing attention in planning theory. Greater attention is thus being paid to what has been called the spatialization of justice and the desire for a just city. Susan Fainstein, Edward Soja and others have all written extensively on the subject. Most of these narratives have been informed by a re-reading of the spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault. There has also been an increasing acceptance of the presence of conflict and a shift away from privileging consensus as a goal in the planning process. Such a shift has been one propagated by proponents of a radical critical planning theory based on the belief that the agonistic approach in its acknowledgement on the ineluctable presence of conflict is probably the only one which is valid in the pluralistic city of today (Pløger 2004, Painter 2005).

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#### INTRODUCTION

Most of current discussions on spatial justice have been informed by Michel Foucault writings (and lectures) on Power (disciplinary and regulatory) and how it impacts urban space and Henri Lefebvre's writings on Space and especially on his emphasise on the need for centrality in and ability to appropriate the city for those who are marginalized. Lefebvre wrote the following:

*The right to the city manifests itself as a superior form of rights: right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit. The right to the oeuvre, to participation and appropriation (clearly distinct from the right to property), are implied in the right to the city (Lefebvre 2006, pp. 173-174).*

Furthermore, he also said, this right cannot be achieved without the presence and action of the working class (ibid. p 154). In addition, he demanded that this right be extended to the immigrants, the 'marginal' and even 'the privileged' (ibid. 34). David Harvey has also stated that the right to the city is far more than the

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individual liberty to access the urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is a common rather than an individual right because this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization (Harvey 2008, p. 23).

One can therefore argue that, just city theorists can be divided into three groups; those, like Harvey, who approach it from a Marxian standpoint with a focus on redistribution and those like Iris Young, who privilege what they called recognition (of difference) over redistribution and who together with other thinkers like Ash Amin, casts doubts on focusing on ideals like integration, social cohesion etc. saying that issues of privilege and disadvantage are more critical than so-called group clustering (Young 2000; Amin 2002). Others like Peter Marcuse who while agreeing to the need for spatial justice argue that in addition to distributional equity, a just city has to directly confront the issues of power in society while recognizing the importance of utopian thinking (Marcuse 2009).

I have decided to focus on the school and the refugee reception centre because I believe it is in their spaces that both these issues (identity and justice) intersect. My interest in these cases was piqued by a recent article in a leading Finnish newspaper that referred to studies by the City of Helsinki Urban Facts, projecting the proportion of pupils of immigrant background in the Helsinki comprehensive school system will reach 23.3% from a current 11 %<sup>i</sup>. The same article rather ominously informs us that there are already some schools where around a third of the school children do not speak Finnish or Swedish as a mother tongue and some with virtually no pupil with a foreign background. This has given rise to fears about possible 'white flight' though it is often said that there is still very little evidence of this happening in schools with a significant number of immigrant/foreign pupils. Some politicians have already started to contemplate on corrective measures which can be taken to avoid the situation where the immigrant pupil population will dominate in any school. One such measure, mooted by Henna Virkkunen in 2009, the Minister of Education, has called for the capping of the proportion of immigrant pupils to 20% in any school. This proposal was however criticized by Rauno Jarnila who was the head of the Education Department of the City of Helsinki<sup>ii</sup>. In Espoo, the city council has recently proposed putting a cap of 15% on the proportion of immigrant pupils in any comprehensive school. This has been done despite the protests by the principals of the affected schools saying that they have seen no evidence of exceptional behavioural problems in their schools<sup>iii</sup>. A similar fear was evident in the discussion of the location of two new reception centres in Helsinki. Resistance to their establishment by the residents of the affected areas has been and still is voracious. This despite the fact that the two existing centres are deemed to be woefully inadequate to meet current needs. The politicians, in passing the motion for their *temporary* establishment, defined the issue as a human rights question. In both of these cases, the concern has been to preserve what one might term as an illusion of normalcy (the norm being the identity of the dominant social group) in the face of increasing heterogeneity. Efforts are thus made to deny others of the right to appropriate their city as Lefebvre called for.

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**BACKGROUND : Ethnic minorities, Immigrants and Refugees in Finland**

### **Ethnic minorities**

Though Finland is ethnically exceptionally homogeneous, there exists within its territory what one can argue are ethnic minorities. These can basically be divided into two groups; the so-called traditional minorities and recent arrivals that are commonly referred to as immigrants. Refugees are both within and without the construction of the Finnish immigrant.

The Swedish-speaking Finns are the largest group of traditional minorities. According to Statistics Finland, in 2007 there were 290392 Swedish speakers in Finland making up 5.4% of the population of Finland. They are however more of a linguistic rather than ethnic minority whose rights have been enshrined in the Finnish constitution since 1917 when Finland got her independence. The constitution of the newly independent country declared that Finnish and Swedish were to be its two official languages. They were also given constitutional parity with the Finnish majority. Swedish speaking Finns are thus entitled not only to their own parallel education system (there are over 300 Swedish speaking comprehensive schools in Finland), but also other cultural and political institutions. There are six permanent Swedish theatres in Finland, three of them in Helsinki, one in Espoo, one in Turku and one in Vaasa. They also have the right to have Swedish language programs on the state radio and television networks. Like the majority, most of them belong to the Finnish Evangelical Church, with services in Swedish (Swedish in Finland)<sup>iv</sup>.

According to its website (<http://www.sfp.fi/en/>) the Swedish People's Party (Svenska Folkpartiet-SFP)'s main goal is the protection of the position of the Swedish language in Finland and the rights of Swedish speaking Finns. This stance makes it the main political party of the Swedish speaking minority. Another institution, (albeit semi-official) the Swedish People's Assembly (Svenska Finlands Folkting) functions in an advisory capacity to so-called regular governing institutions. Its main functions are: to offer a forum for political discussions on issues of concern to all Swedish speaking Finns, notwithstanding their political affiliations. It also serves as a pressure group in matters of legitimate interest of the Swedish speaking population. The Assembly also engages in research and disseminates information to the public about the Swedish speaking Finns and their situation. However, except for the islands of Åland<sup>v</sup>, Swedish speaking Finns do not have a territory of their own within the Finnish state<sup>vi</sup>.

The other Traditional Minorities are the Sami people, the Jews, the Tatars and the so-called Old Russians (to differentiate them from recent immigrants from Russia). For a long time vigorous attempts were made to assimilate the Sami and the Roma. For example in the 19<sup>th</sup> century boarding schools were established for the Sami for the sole purpose of assimilating them into the majority culture. However since the 70s, they have both been given increasing cultural rights. The Sami language was given official status in comprehensive schools within the Sami domicile areas in the 80s and in 1991 it was officially recognized in the Finnish constitution.

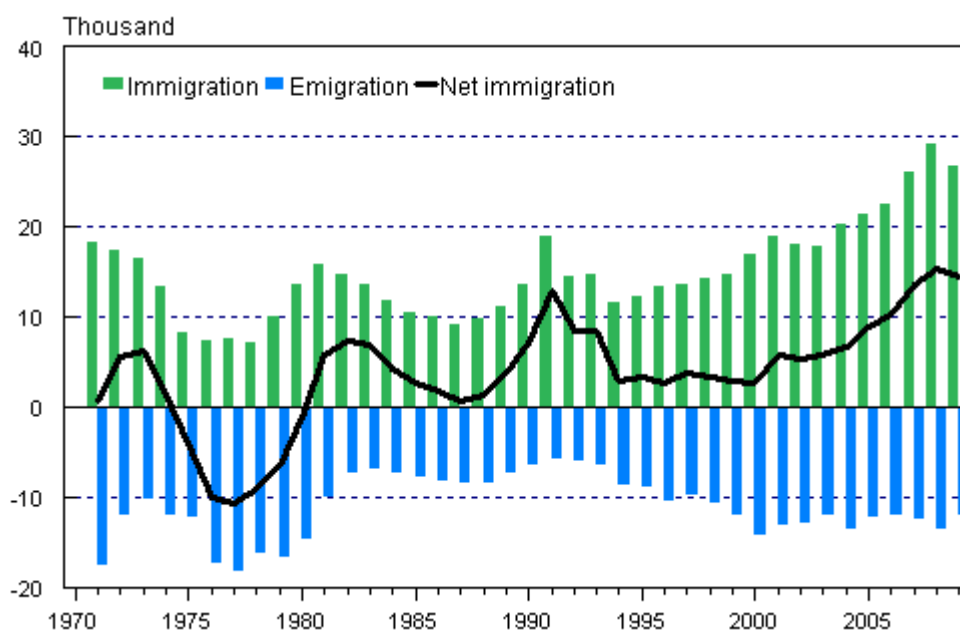
The Roma are in a more perilous situation. This could partly be because they are not territorial and that they had arrived in Finland in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Though the Romani were guaranteed the right to retain and develop their own culture in 1995, they are still marginalized and discriminated against. Their

language is recognized by the Finnish state only as a non-territorial minority language. They are however recognized as a national minority under the European Framework Convention for the protection of National Minorities.

The other National Minorities (Tatars, Jews and Russians) also have a right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. They all had their own schools but due to declining populations only the ones that cater to the Russian speakers remain active.

## Immigrants and Refugees

### Immigration and emigration to Finland in 1971–2009



Source: Population and Cause of Death Statistics. Statistics Finland

According to the Canadian political theorist Kymlicka, immigrants are only those who have left their home countries for economic and/or political reasons and emigrated to another country and have the right to become citizens of their new countries. Thus, according to him, the right to citizenship is what differentiates immigrants from those that he categorizes as mestics who do not have this right. Mestics include illegal immigrants, guest workers etc. (Kymlicka 2002, pp. 352-353). However in most narratives of today, all these are considered immigrants, differing only in the legality of their residence status (illegal/legal immigrants).

Though one could argue that most of the so-called ethnic minorities have immigrant roots the term as currently used mostly refers to those immigrants who have arrived since the 1980s. The first significant groups were quota refugees from Vietnam who first arrived in 1979 and continued to do so until the early 90s. During this period (1987-1990) a smaller group of refugees from Cambodia were accepted (Valtonen 1999, p. 8). Since the 1990s, Russians, Somalis, Kurds, Iraqis

and those from the former Yugoslavia asylum seekers arrived in increasing numbers. In 2009, out of a total of 5988, the largest numbers were from Iraq (1195), Somalia (1180), Bulgaria (739), Russia (602) and Afghanistan (461). Most of the Bulgarian asylum seekers are Roma. Another group that has contributed quite a lot to Finnish immigration is the so-called Ingrians from Estonia and Russia who were accepted as “re-migrants” under the Finnish repatriation policy.

### Asylum-seekers and refugees

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Asylum-seekers	3 170	1 651	3 443	3 221	3 861	3 574	2 324	1 505	4 035
Decisions on asylum <sup>1)</sup>									
- Asylum granted	9	4	14	7	29	12	38	68	89
- Residence permit granted	458	809	577	487	771	585	580	792	696
-									
No asylum or residence permit granted	2 121	1 045	2 312	2 443	3 418	2 472	1 481	961	1 011
Family reunification									
- Decisions in favour <sup>2)</sup>	214	475	363	303	162	355	129	267	467
- Adverse decisions <sup>2)</sup>	302	762	324	499	746	316	209	136	239
Quota	700	750	750	750	750	750	750	750	750
- Additional quota	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Refugees received by municipalities <sup>3)</sup>	1 212	1 857	1 558	1 202	1 662	1 501	1 142	1 793	2 170
<b>Immigrating as refugees, from 1973-</b>	<b>18 835</b>	<b>20 692</b>	<b>22 250</b>	<b>23 452</b>	<b>25 114</b>	<b>26 615</b>	<b>27 757</b>	<b>29 550</b>	<b>31 769</b>

1) Decisions of the Finnish Immigration Service

2) One decision can concern more than one person

3) Refugees by quota, asylum-seekers having received a favourable decision and persons admitted under the family reunification scheme

Sources: [Ministry of the Interior](#), [Finnish Immigration Service](#)

In 2008, 29,100 persons immigrated to Finland which was 3,100 higher than the previous year. The net gain totalled 15,450 persons which is the highest number in the post-war period<sup>vii</sup>.

Finland's population grew by 25,830 in 2008, which was the largest growth since 1992.

Furthermore, for the second successive year, migration gain from abroad contributed more to the increase in population than natural growth. In the same year, 4035 people applied for asylum. This influx has in some ways contributed to the current discourse on immigration in Finland in which the figure of the immigrant has been collapsed into the racialised figure of the refugee causing an accompanying rise in the temperature of the rhetoric used. This happens despite the fact that refugees form a minute proportion of the number of immigrants entering the country every year.

## THE SCHOOL AS A SITE OF RESISTANCE

Finland is no exception to the use of education (first as part of the church and later of the school) as an instrument of normalization. With the establishment of the Lutheran Church by King Gustav Vasa of Sweden in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, came the requirement of literacy so that people could read the Bible. One had to be able to read before he or she could get married. When the spirit of Nationalism became stronger, one of its main goals was to replace Swedish as a medium of instruction in Finnish schools. It was deemed imperative for the construction of Finnishness that Swedish be replaced. What better place to do this than in the space where identity is formed?

After independence, when Finland became a liberal democracy, education became a social right, forming one of the pillars of citizenship. All citizens were given the right to free basic education. This right has been further extended to all those who reside in Finland irrespective of their nationality or residency status. Thus even the children of those seeking asylum and whose status has not been established also have the right to an education.

The importance of education in the Finnish society can thus not be overstated. The fact that Finnish school children have been at the top PISA<sup>viii</sup> charts in the last three cycles is a source of national pride. This pride is not a recent phenomenon for as the Scottish evangelist, John Patterson noted during his travels in Sweden (Finland was then part of Sweden) in 1807-1808, that it was extremely rare to meet anyone over the age of 12 who could not read, and most could also write. He noted that an illiterate person could not get confirmation, give an oath in a court of justice, get married and was seen as a disgrace to the community and was nobody in the eye of the law. Though there wasn't an extensive system of parochial schools, parents and the clergy were still responsible for the education of their children (Johansson 1981, pp. 152-153).

It is however the intersection of disciplinary and regulatory powers in the school space that is relevant to me. Foucault has written extensively on the use of discipline and its instruments (surveillance etc.) in schools. Less discussed, and more pertinent to my discussion, is the use of what Foucault called regulatory mechanisms to protect life (Foucault 2003, Ch.11). One way of doing so, I would argue, is by making sure that there is no contamination in the school space that would endanger life as we know it. This is very much evident in the current debates about the presence of immigrant pupils in schools of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. It can be argued that, though, the immigrant pupil has been given a right to education, this right does not extend to changing the status quo. She is required to conform to the existent norms that guide the acquiring of such an education. Even when, as called for in section 2 of the Act for the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers 493/1999, she is given an opportunity to pursue what is called her cultural heritage, this is done outside the normative space. Separate language and religion classes are given, targeted specifically to such as her. Her presence has very little impact on the content of Finnish education and the space in which it is given. One can thus argue that, the school is a site of resistance to the corruption of the Finnish identity. The dominant group retains its purity by refusing and limiting access to

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those that it deems potential sources of corruption, in this case constituted in the culture and identity of the immigrant.

According to the Helsingin Sanomat, the cities of Helsinki and Espoo are concerned with what they see as the increasing social differentiation in schools<sup>ix</sup>. Helsinki is thus setting aside significant sums of money to be used in areas where the immigrant population is highest. Of special concern are those schools that currently contain large numbers of native-born Finns who are in danger of being marginalized, presumably by the encroaching ethnicisation of the schools. In other words, the concern is about the prospect of the “white flight” phenomenon where families of the native born population start to avoid schools and areas where the proportion of immigrants is high and how it would impact the normalization process. One major worry for concerned parents, it seems, is the effect such numbers of pupils whose mother tongue is not Finnish would have on the development of their children’s language. In other words, the possibility that their children will be marked as deviant for their Finnish would not be considered up to the norm thus limiting their access to the privileges of citizenship (better employment etc.). This concern has an impact on the settlement pattern of the city, for native-born Finnish parents will increasingly settle in areas with fewer immigrants<sup>x</sup> which would also be reflected on their proportion in neighbourhood schools. In Espoo, the Espoo City Council has approved a policy line according to which a 15 percent cap will be placed on the number of pupils at any one school who have an inadequate command of Finnish or Swedish. According to the head of the Espoo Education Department, “there is a concern that social unrest might result from the marginalization of immigrants and their isolation in certain areas. The goal is to even out social differences and to increase social cohesiveness”. By so doing, it is believed, multiculturalism will be spread more equitably and thus help Finland avoid the challenges that come with it. One solution being mooted is the arrangement of transportation of the surplus pupils to another school<sup>xi</sup>.

What I find interesting is the concern about the *presence* of immigrants and not their absence. Very little is said of the schools which have very few immigrants. The use of statistics to bolster the case is symptomatic of what Foucault warned against, the increasing use of the technologies of biopower to further what can be argued are racist goals. These pupils will be transported based mostly on their race (the term immigrant is used here as a surrogate for the more problematic racial terms). As their parents have limited recourse to the private schools that might be available or moving to other neighbourhoods with fewer immigrants, bussing will be the only alternative, giving further evidence to their powerlessness. What is also not answered is, “how would this guarantee the quality of education in places with significant immigrant populations?” Or more importantly is how can we counter the stigma that is attached to students studying in schools with a significant immigrant/non-white population? And also, very little is heard from the ones most affected, the immigrant group. This can partly be explained as an indication their lack of political power and lack of representation in the planning profession.

The importance of the School in the Finnish urban space is beyond question. This is clearly evident in the number of schools featured in the local architectural magazines, books and the number of architectural

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competitions dedicated to schools. There is thus no doubt about the important role that the school plays in the construction of Finnishness. With this in mind, one of the most important sites of confrontation in multiculturalism has been and still is the school. The school curricula has been attacked and defended in this struggle over identity and whose story matters. The recognition of existent gender and ethnic diversity has been reflected in this struggle, in which the marginalized have demanded a greater presence in the telling of a nation's history. In the Anglo Saxon world, there have been demands for the inclusion of literature, stories and histories of and by authors from these social groups. In countries such as Finland, schools are required to provide the opportunity for instruction in the pupil's faith and language whenever viable.

Another area of confrontation is the celebration of events such as Christmas which it is claimed, have become symbols of Finnishness rather than the Christian faith. This has been contested by those who do not belong to this faith. In other parts of Europe the wearing of the hijab, either by pupils or staff members has aroused nationalistic passions.

All of these confrontations have taken place in the space of the school. This is why it is strange that the situation of this space has not been more interrogated except by a few philosophers such as Michel Foucault who saw it as a development of the Panopticon, seeing it as an instrument of discipline just like the prison, the hospital and the workshop were (Foucault 2010). He also argued that the school was part and parcel of the project of normalization of society, where deviance was excised.

### **THE REFUGEE RECEPTION CENTRE AS A SITE OF RESISTANCE**

As we have seen, the importance of the School in the urban space, though contested, it is universally accepted. The situation is different in the case of the Refugee Reception Centre whose presence is not only contested but vigorously resisted. This is reflected on the temporality of not only its inhabitants but of the typology itself. Refugee Centres have no place in the Master Plans of the city let alone the pages of architectural magazines. However, how we treat refugees<sup>xii</sup> is subject to regional and global codes of conduct.

Though refugees are not obliged to stay at a reception centre, they are all required to register there. All services are provided through the reception centre. If a refugee needs an allowance, to meet a social worker or a doctor, all of these are to be arranged through the reception centre. Once a refugee is granted a right to stay in the country, she is required to move out as soon as possible. In case the application is denied, she is removed from the country either voluntarily or by force. The stay at the reception centre is thus always temporary.

This temporality extends to the structure itself. Refugee reception centres tend to be located in temporary buildings, ranging from converted prisons to hotels and are accepted only under the condition of their being temporary. Thus though statistics show a gradual increase in refugees in the foreseeable future, there is a reluctance to recognize their permanence. On the contrary, one can say, attempts lean towards making them invisible.

### **THE REFUGEE CENTRE AS A PANOPTIC SPACE**

The invisibility of the refugee makes the resemblance of the refugee reception centres to what Foucault called instruments of panoptic much more vivid than in the case of the modern school where these instruments are more subtle. Foucault has also pointed that Jeremy Bentham, the architect of the Panopticon, had required that power must at all times be visible and unverifiable (Foucault 2010, p. 223) for it to operate efficiently. The predominance of surveillance (mechanisms of observation), the removal of most aspects of privacy (those in authority have constant access to the refugees' rooms, most of whom share their accommodation). The gaze of those in positions of power is thus constant.

The need to report to the centre regularly is another aspect of control. Even when a refugee finds accommodation outside the centre, she is required to report regularly to a specific centre and the centre remains her point of location. It is only through the centre that she has access to all those services (medical treatment, education, punishment) that are available to citizens. It is as if the refugee has checked into Hotel California where he can check out anytime that he likes but he can never leave<sup>xiii</sup>. We should remember that one of the inherent roles of a panoptic system is to *fix*. Not only to correct what is broken but to immobilize. The system can thus more efficiently observe its subject, the prisoner then, the refugee in this case by fixing them. The refugee reception centre also operates as a Panopticon at another level. Because they are individualized, the refugees no longer have an aspect of a crowd, they become a collection of separated individuals who are easier to number and supervise. The offers of an education and the rules pertaining to good behaviour are all meant, like any good panoptic system, at making the refugees more useful individuals. The refugees are expected to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered (Finnish language etc.) and are punished if they don't. Any behaviour that is deemed unacceptable at the centre is also punished. In this way, the refugee centre is similar to the school where one of its goals is to convert the children of those who come from outside the dominant culture into useful citizens. They both then serve as the battleground where contamination into the dominant culture is resisted, where power is brought to bear on the deviant to normalize. It is therefore in these spaces as well that the process of normalization takes place. Thus any project of resistance to normalization would have to be cognizant of such places. In other words, if we are to resist/mitigate this process, we have to recognize where it operates and how it does so.

### **THE SCHOOL AND REFUGEE RECEPTION CENTRE AS HETEROTOPIC SPACES.**

In his essay titled "Des Espace Autres" (translated into "Of Other Spaces [1967], Heterotopias), Foucault declares this epoch to be the epoch of space, a space which is heterogeneous. He however isolates a particular type of site, which according to him, has the property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invent the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect. These are sites of utopia and those of heterotopia. Utopias present a society in its perfect form and are thus fundamentally unreal spaces. Heterotopias on the other hand are like "counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture,

are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted". Foucault uses the metaphor of a mirror to explain heterotopia. The mirror is a metaphor for utopia because the image that you see does not exist, but it is also a heterotopia because the mirror is a real object that shapes the way you relate to your own image.<sup>xiv</sup>

Heterotopias are governed by six principles:

The first one is that they are present in all cultures. They are however not all similar. Traditionally, in so-called primitive societies, there is a form of heterotopia which he terms, crisis heterotopias which are privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are in, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc. In the Western world, these heterotopias are being replaced by what he calls "heterotopias of deviation": those in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed. These are the rest homes and psychiatric hospitals, prisons and I would add, in our case, the refugee reception centre. Asylum seekers in such centres are deviant in the sense that their legitimacy is under suspicion. They are kept there (not necessarily, physically)<sup>xv</sup> until the society is satisfied of their legitimacy and if it is found that they are not, they are expelled.

The second principle is that they can function in different ways. The same heterotopia can, according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs, have one function or another. Foucault uses the example of a cemetery. He argues that, though it has always existed in Western culture, its use and location has changed through time. Though originally it was centrally located (next to the church), from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it has been banished to the edges of the city. This was partly caused by the obsession of death as illness. The dead, it is supposed, bring illnesses to the living. The cemeteries came to constitute, no longer the sacred and immortal heart of the city, but the other city, where each family possesses its dark resting place. The refugee centre has also shifted from its central position where it was situated within the church to the peripheries of the city. It is thus no longer part of the city but outside of it. Even when it is located in the centre, there is little connection with the city. It exists in isolation. One can also argue that while in the former years, it was seen as a duty for the society to provide asylum to those who seek it, now it is feared that they might have a contagious effect on it, hence the need to quarantine them.

The third principle is that it is capable of juxtaposing in a single real space several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. The cinema, in which, a three-dimensional space is projected onto a two dimensional screen is one such space. The garden is another such space in which a small parcel of the world reflects its totality. One can also see the refugee centre in this where its heterogeneity is a reflection of the world we live in. Refugees come from all parts of the world. All races can be found there.

The fourth principle is that heterotopias are often linked to slices in time; they start to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time. I would also argue here that this is true of the refugee reception centre also. At the refugee reception centre, time is frozen. The refugees occupy that space between the legitimate and illegitimate. They exist in a state of limbo.

The fifth principle is that Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the Heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public space. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. The refugee is also compelled to enter the refugee reception centre for her to be recognized. On entering, she has to submit to being processed. Likewise, the non-refugee has to follow a certain procedure to gain access to the centre.

The sixth and final principle of Heterotopia is that they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. They are either spaces of illusion or compensation. As spaces of illusion, they expose every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned. As spaces of compensation, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. The school is one such space, a space of compensation in which our perfect notion of ourselves is portrayed. The school forms the ideal of what we aspire to. It is thus a space to be protected by all means necessary. These include expulsions of those who are deemed to be a threat to this notion of perfection. One could see the recent discussions regarding the proportion of “immigrants” in our schools to be such a case. In order to contain the threat posed by the immigrant children, limits on their numbers are proposed and for the surplus, expulsion out of their neighbourhoods through busing.

## **CONCLUSION**

Both Foucault and Lefebvre offer very little to issues of injustice from an identarian point of view that focuses on ethnic difference. For that, one has to turn to the postcolonial school and agonistic pluralism. Post colonialists such as Ghassan Hage offers an insight on the concept of Whiteness and how it is reflected in current discourse (Hage 1998).

Agonism with its acceptance of conflict and the legitimation of passion in the democratic process offers valuable lessons. Chantal Mouffe demand for a system that puts power and antagonism at the centre has particular resonance. This is grounded in her argument that power is constitutive of social relations and any formation of “we” has to be accompanied by a “they”. Such a relationship has always a potential for antagonism (Mouffe 2005, pp. 15-16). Denying this would be counterproductive, hence her call for the transformation of the us/them relationship where them is seen as an enemy to one in which she is seen as an adversary with a legitimate right to her political position (Mouffe 2005, p.20). Such a shift cannot take place in the unified public sphere envisaged by deliberative theorists but in a context of subaltern counter publics (Fraser 1990, p. 67), competing, complementing and making alliances with each other. Such a situation would allow for diverse conceptions of citizenship.

In his report on Ethnicity and the Multicultural City, Ash Amin argues that the gains of prosaic interaction need to be worked out in the city’s micro-publics of banal multicultures. These would include the Youth centre, the housing estate, the school etc. He however cautions that habitual contact in itself cannot guarantee cultural exchange. He thus suggests that people need to step out of their daily environments into other spaces acting as sites of banal transgressions which would work as spaces of cultural displacement and

destabilization (Amin 2002, p. 14). An example of such a place is the Tensta Architecture School (situated within the Tensta Gymnasium) established in 2008-2009 by the KTH School of Architecture and Built Environment in the suburb of Tensta in Stockholm. As a preparatory school for the study of Architecture and Planning located in a much maligned part of Stockholm, it offers one way of making one of the most ethnically exclusive of professions accessible to people from ethnic minorities. On the other hand, because it cannot by law in Sweden exclude anyone from attending it invites people from the dominant group to venture to these neighbourhoods where for probably the first time in their life study in a very ethnically diverse environment.

Amin is dismissive of the primacy given to community cohesion, arguing that rather than aiming for a single unitary sense of place one should exploit the “potential for overlap and cross-fertilisation that exist within these spaces which are constituted as territorialized and multiple publics. These spaces should be accepted as the spatially open, culturally heterogeneous and socially variegated spaces that they are, not imagined as future cohesive or integrated communities ”(Amin 2002, p. 7).

Coming back to Finland, we are reminded that plans are afoot to transfer the upper form students at the Keski-Espoo Comprehensive School in Suvola to other schools. The school is said to suffer from a *questionable reputation because nearly half of its pupils speak a language other than Finnish as their mother tongue*<sup>xvi</sup>. This, it was suggested, could be improved by moving the upper form pupils to other schools. The extra space available after such action could then be used to teach Finnish to immigrant *parents*, it was further suggested.

Most of the refugee reception centres are full because municipalities are unwilling to accept those asylum seekers who have been granted asylum or issued with a residence permit. Even those municipalities that are desperate for new tax payers because many of their young population has moved to larger cities do not want them. This is in addition to neighbourhoods opposing the construction of new reception centres even though the number of asylum seekers has increased dramatically. The refugee is unwanted and the refugee reception centres are the classic NIMBY typology.

In my opinion, both of these issues have an impact on our pursuit of the just city. By not acknowledging the underlying cause of resistance (race/ethnic difference), we continue to deny justice to our fellow inhabitants of the city. It is thus imperative that race and ethnicity be acknowledged so that our fears can be addressed. I argue so because schools with a significant number of foreigners are not new to Finland. There still exists Russian Schools, German Schools, and French Schools. Paradoxically, recently a Chinese School has been established in Vantaa. None of these attract half the vehemence that is addressed to schools with a significant population of non-European (except for the Chinese School) pupils. It is also evident in the case of asylum seekers.

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We should question ourselves why asylum seekers from the former Yugoslavia were welcomed with open arms while that accorded to current ones is anything but warm. The only major difference that I can see is sadly phenotypic or what W.E.B Du Bois vividly referred to as *the grosser physical differences of color, hair and bone* (Du Bois 2007, p.8).

The School and the Refugee Reception Centre (RRC) can thus be seen on one hand as sites of resistance to deviance on the part of the dominant group, to the corruptive influence of the abnormal and on the other, as *potential* sites of resistance to process of normalization by the stranger. In these spaces the process of normalization is paramount, in many cases fuelled by a fear and/or suspicion of what be called the racialised stranger. Justice in the City cannot be attained without planning addressing this reality.

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<sup>iii</sup> [http://yle.fi/uutiset/news/2009/12/espoo\\_wants\\_more\\_even\\_distribution\\_of\\_immigrant\\_school\\_pupils\\_1296803.html](http://yle.fi/uutiset/news/2009/12/espoo_wants_more_even_distribution_of_immigrant_school_pupils_1296803.html)

<sup>iv</sup> Swedish in Finland brochure by Svenska Finlands Folkting (

<http://www.kulturfonden.fi/files/Swedish%20in%20Finland.pdf>)

<sup>v</sup> The Åland islands whose population is predominantly Swedish speaking are semi-autonomous. The right to self government is laid down in the Finnish constitution.

<sup>vi</sup> From Swedish in Finland brochure by Svenska Finlands Folkting.

<sup>vii</sup> Statistics Finland [http://www.stat.fi/til/muutl/index\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/muutl/index_en.html)

<sup>viii</sup> Program for International Student Assessment for 15 year old school children coordinated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

<sup>ix</sup> <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Helsinki+seeks+to+counteract+social+differentiation+of+schools/1135250316955>

<sup>x</sup> <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Helsinki+seeks+to+counteract+social+differentiation+of+schools/1135250316955>

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<sup>xii</sup> "A Refugee is a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." Article 1, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

<sup>xiii</sup> Hotel California by the Eagles, 1976.

<sup>xiv</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heterotopia\\_%28space%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heterotopia_%28space%29)

<sup>xv</sup> In Finland, asylum seekers are not required to stay in refugee reception centres while their applications are being reviewed. However, no matter their physical location, the refugee reception centre remains the primary location where they interact with the state. Whatever their circumstances, asylum seekers are required to register as a customer at the nearest refugee reception centre. The refugee reception centre has to be informed about their current address if they live outside of it. And if they need “ a living allowance or assistance from a social worker or doctor, these will be provided through the refugee reception centre at which she is registered.

<sup>xvi</sup> <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Parents+enraged+by+plans+to+cut+upper+forms+from+Keski-Espoo+Comprehensive+School/1135253430171>