SAFETY AND AGONISTIC CONCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC LIFE

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Abstract

This paper seeks to enable for conceptual resistance towards a desirable urban order of 'safe public realms', to which the 'planning for safety' directly contributes. One way of engaging in that kind of resistance is by contributing to politicising the system of beliefs informing planning for safety. Planning for safety is primarily legitimised morally as the ethically right thing to do given the identified violation of a human right in the public realm, the right to freely move about in the public environment. By drawing from Mouffean agonistic political theory (2005), there is no given interpretation nor implementation of ethical principles such as human rights, but rather different interpretations given what point of reference one is departing from, and should hence be subjected to political struggle. To conceptually set the arena for choice contributes to politicising phenomena which previously have been legitimised as the right or the (only) natural thing to do. 'Planning for safety' should therefore be interpreted resting on specific ideological assumptions of public life which frames both how 'the human right' is conceptualised as well as what planning solutions are considered possible.

This article seeks to establish alternative conceptualisations of public life, with an aim to make visible how there is *not* one notion of public life and thereby re-politicise the ideological premises underpinning 'safety planning' and thereby allow for conceptual resistance. This is carried out by establishing a discursive field of public life, a kind of conceptual arena for choice making. The discursive field is represented by four different discourses of public life centred around different ideals such as rational, dramaturgical, conflictual and consensual public life. In this conceptual context, lines of conflict have been discerned based on a thematic of purpose, character, criteria for participation and conception of identities, which have taken the form of agonistic dimensions, from which planning discursively can position itself. This paper argues that we first must agonistically agree on what notion of public life should govern the development of our cities, and thereafter discuss what the consequences would be for planning.

Keywords: safety; public life; agonistic pluralism for

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Introduction

It is important to feel secure, both in the immediate surroundings around the home as well as the city centre and when carrying out activities. Security has to do with feelings– which are very difficult to affect and alter, but are often linked to places. By altering these places, it might be possible to affect some of the feelings that are strongly associated with insecurity (Places to feel secure in – Inspiration for urban development, The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning 2011: p foreword).

Being able to move around freely and securely is a democratic right for both men and women. Working from a gender-equality perspective allows us to make cities and urban areas more secure places for everyone. (Places to feel secure in – Inspiration for urban development, The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning 2011:p 9).

These are quotes from a publication by the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (2011), aiming to guide planners in organising the physical environment for achieving a greater sense of safety[1]. These quotes set out the importance of feeling safe and secure when moving about in the urban and residential environment since 'having the freedom to safely move in the public realm' constitutes a democratic right. The quotes furthermore argue for the importance of configuring the urban environment for improving perceptions of insecurity, with an aim of making the public realm safe for everyone. Planning for safety is morally legitimised, as everyone has the *right* to feel safe when moving about in the public realm. The above quotes also emphasise the spatial dimension to the perception of safety, and the possibility of configuring it in such a way that it will become universally safe. The quotes do not only emphasise space, they explicitly depart from a spatial determinist point of view; by altering the physical environment feelings are conceived to change. People's feelings are conceived to be determined by space and not vice versa, and refer to perceived safe structures, perceived safe spatial forms. Furthermore, the exclusionary consequences inherent to such planning are disguised by claims of universality. 'Safe public realms' appear moreover to be a desired public order, and can in many ways be understood as ratifying a socio-spatial urban order rather than challenging or resisting it.

[1] The Swedish board for housing, building and planning translate the Swedish word "trygghet" as security. In this article I choose to translate "trygghet" as "safety", since the security discourse (säkerhet in Swedish) forms another established field of study relating back to security in terms of risk in traffic planning or questions of national security which is different from the subject that is in focus in this paper. The Swedish word "trygghet" (safety) is more general in its character and is relating back to questions of ontological security as well as a general perception of being in danger.

This study draws from Mouffean agonistic theory which sets out society as contingent and inherently political in character (2005: p 17). There is as such no given order of society nor spatial developments which benefit 'everyone' without exclusionary consequences, as choices are always made based on principles of inclusion and exclusion (Mouffe, 2005: p 18). This theoretical point of departure refutes as such the notion of universalism apparent in these quotes as it contributes to de-politicisation of phenomena. This agonistic political theory furthermore defines the political as an activity of choice making (Mouffe, 2005: p 10).

Problems with moral legitimacy

How can one approach so called 'safety planning' which almost every municipality in Sweden (and probably in the Western world) readily participates in through different practices, of which the above examples are an illustration? How can one challenge a desired order (the aspired state of "safe" public realms) which appear to be legitimised morally rather than politically? 'Planning for safety' is considered good as everyone has the right to feel safe in the public realm. It would be morally reprehensible to challenge the principles behind such order, but it is different identifying that someone's rights have been violated against, than to suggest what course of action would follow. In other words, it is different answering the question what planning can do about it (Alexander, 2002: p 237), as "… there is a difference between 'having a right' and 'doing right'" (Dworkin, cited in Campbell and Marshall, 2002: p 179). This means that it is difficult having deontological principles such as "human rights" as a norm for guiding planning practice as it doesn't advise spatial planning on what to do, or what the good thing is to do, but rather that spatial planning ethically ought to do something. Using the rights based principles for legitimating planning practice readily disguises the ideological premises that the suggested course of action rests on (Alexander, 2002: p 233). In the spatial planning safety discourse, particular alteration or configurations of the urban fabric are made as everyone has the right to feel safe. The ideological foundation, the system of belief, for making such interpretation of the rights based principles are here obscured, as there is no such thing as a given answer or solution to the identified problem nor in how to interpret the notion of human rights. The ethical principles advising spatial planning to act and do something can be consensually agreed upon, but the planning actions which would follow them can, or rather should be subject to political struggle and contestation. These ethical principles of human rights informing the political society can be referred to as being of ethico-political character (Mouffe, 2005:p 121). This means that the political society may consensually agree to have ethical principles informing the political society, including spatial planning practice, but where their interpretation and implementation are subject to political conflict, as there is not one correct or true interpretation of any given phenomenon (Mouffe in Hirsch & Miessen (eds), 2012: p 11). The interpretation and implementation should instead be subject to agonistic political struggle, where alternatives are vividly present in challenging the established order.

Resistance of "safety" as a given desired urban order through re-politicisation

One way of resisting safety as a desired urban order and thereby challenging the planning for safety, is in the interpretation and implementation of these principles. In approaching the phenomenon 'planning for safety', one must understand it rests on one (ideological) construction of public life, which includes norms and values for its execution. This construction of public life embodies choices made concerning its envisaged purpose and character. Is safety the answer or solution to a purpose of freely moving from A to B, or is it an answer to individuals in becoming self-governing? Is safety the answer to a public life characterised by a silence and visual passiveness, or is it an answer to a public life characterised by oral activeness? This construction of public life embodies furthermore choices made concerning envisaged criterion for partaking in public life, and choices in conceptualising individual identities. Is safety for example a solution in a public life relying on certainty for participating or is it an answer when considering uncertainty as an existential precondition for public life? Is safety moreover a solution in a public life where individuals are conceived as men, women or other social group identities, or in a public life where individuals are politically and performatively construed?

Depending on how one chooses to conceptualise public life, consequently frames the problem of how the problem of fear is understood, and what spatial planning actions or interventions are conceivable. It frames in other words what conceptual outcomes are considered possible. Illuminating how safety planning rests on specific assumptions of public life opens up alternative conceptualisations for political deliberation. Not being able to make choices, or believe that there are no alternatives to prevalent ideals can be considered both apolitical and unethical.

This article seeks to establish alternative conceptualisations of public life, with an aim to make visible how there is not one notion of public life and thereby re-politicise the ideological premises underpinning 'safety planning' and allow for resistance.

Firstly, four different discourses on public life will be established. This is referred to as the *discursive field* (Laclau and Mouffe, 1987: p 86, cited in Torfing, 1999: p 92), which is defined as 'the conceptual possibilities for constructing phenomenon'. In the discursive field of public life it is possible to discern different conceptions of its conceived (1) purpose, (2) character, (3) criteria for partaking and (4) identities. These four thematics can be described forming lines of political conflict, taking the form of *agonistic dimensions*, which emphasise 'positions in', rather than polarised 'either or'. Secondly, after having established the discursive field of public life, the conflictual dimensions will be outlined, which make up the base for re-establishing conceptual choice in spatial planning practice safety discourse, and thereby allow for resistance.

Establishing the discursive field of public life

This section includes an establishment of the theoretical horizon, the discursive field, of public life as a basis for unfolding agonistic dimensions of conceptualising public life. The discursive field should not be interpreted to be an exhaustive overview; the literature is instead specifically chosen to represent different conceptual stances on public life. The concepts which different discourses on public life are organised around are; rationality, dramaturgy, conflict, and consensus.

The characteristics of contemporary public life are argued here to be organised around rationality, here embodied in the Simmelian construction of the urban experience at the turn of the twentieth century. The urban modern man is conceived as a rational and private individual who rather explores his emotional self in public than emotionally engage in the Other. In contrast to the (1) rational public life stands alternative constructions of public life organised around (2) dramaturgy here embodied in the writing of Richard Sennett, (3) conflict here embodied in the writing of Hannah Arendt, and (4) consensus here embodied in the writing of Jürgen Habermas. These different constructions all share an idea of the public situated in the exterior- life with others without rendering experiences through the self, as opposed to the interior refuge and focus on the self-, but have however different normative articulations of what public life should be. The conflictual discourse of public life conceives 'exterior' public life to consist of interpersonal encounters and self-exposure, where the urbanite is someone who accepts agony and other mindsets as opposed to being self-affirmed by others. In contrast to the conflictual conception stands the consensual notion of public life, which includes a universalist desire for consensus making through reasoned discourse. The dramaturgical discourse construes public life to be dependent on a "theatrical" ability to act and engage in the Other. The following section will outline these different discursive conceptualisations of urban public life and connect them to the four thematics which form subjects to political conflict.

The discourse of a rational public life

The sociologist Georg Simmel was one of the first to describe modern urban life around the turn of the 20th century. In his famous essay "The metropolis and mental life"(1964 [originally published in 1903]), Simmel constructs the modern urbanite as being forced into becoming a rational and calculating individual due to the repressive forces of over-stimulation in modern city life. Simmel suggests how modern man develops a strategy for sustaining *change* and threatening occurrences by reacting with his intellect as opposed to his emotions as this is the most insensitive organ (1964: p 410-411). The Simmelian urban individual is as such insensitive and reacts with indifference to individuals in the public realm. The rational behaviour is constructed as contributing to a notion of *certainty* in a complex modern urban life. The irrational counterpart forms the opposition and

threat to the order and coherency of modern urban life, and is embodied in the idea of the Simmelian "stranger" as outlined in the essay with the same name (1964 [1908]). The stranger is not construed as an individual but rather as a character of a specific type determined by differentiation from "…what is generally in common" (Frisby, 1986:p 407). And as what is generally in common evolves, everyone can potentially become the stranger. According to the logic of rational public life, the fearful insight of potentiality becoming the stranger contributes to an anxious striving to conform to societal (and community) norms. *Identities* are here constructed based on characters in relation to social group formations. An individual in the public realm is not more than its social group identity, which is defined based on inclusion and exclusion of 'what it is or is not'.

Reacting intellectually with indifference to the surrounding contributes to preserving the inner subjective life (Simmel, 1964: p 411). Modern man hence retreats to his inner self for managing the changing nature of city life. The escape to the inner self should be discursively rendered against the at the time wider bourgeois emphasis on separating the individual from the world (Frisby, 1986:p 82). The emotional inner self, now separated from the damaging aspects of 'the real world', should subjectively be stimulated, for example through the arts. The *purpose* of public life could be interpreted being to stimulate the emotional self, in a public life *characterised* by having to protect the self by becoming quiet and consequently passive. Frisby argues for example how the perspective of the interior forms a dominant feature in the German jugend art movement (1986:p 82). Man is believed becoming "whole" and fulfilled by turning to the aesthetics and the "beauty" in life. The English arts and craft movement is another example which argued for "beauty", decorative arts and "aesthetics" as a way for a better society.

The Simmelian defence mechanism, the rational and inwards oriented way of being, should discursively be set against the overall societal changes of modernity, and can in this context be interpreted as an escape and a response to *fear* of overwhelming societal change. The escape to the "interior" and the increased subjectivity should be understood in parallel to the rise of modernity. Simmel's constructions of the modern urban life that surrounded him in the beginning of the 20th century can be associated with a negativity, the idea that the current order of rational public life is bad for the modern man, that it is self-repressive (Sennett, 2000:p 381). *Urban rationality* can also be conceived as a positive, as a facilitator of communication, although limited to its community, by providing acceptance in the public realm and to anticipate response and action by the other. In other words, urban rationality contributes to a notion of certainty in the urban public. This is a position the Chicago school of urban sociology takes (Bridge, 2005: p 67). Bridge defines this understanding of urban rationality as an "...operationalisation of community norms" (2005:p 67). Urban rationalism hence contributes to the formation of communities of us and them and the defining of the stranger. A *criterion* for partaking in rational public life is as such a notion of certainty, by being able to foresee and expect events and actions.

The criticism towards the Chicago school of positive urban rationalism is embodied in the general appreciation of the "community" and "community norms" as a mere positive, not acknowledging its part in wider structural societal exclusion. Urban rationality could be rendered against structural exclusion AND self-repression, which could be interpreted as negative both for the society and the individual. Negative because the individual is at large unreflectively governed by societal community conventions and norms, unable to emotionally develop himself, his own wills and actions. Taylor, by referring to Hegel, suggests that an idea of liberation based on "being able to do what you want" or "only following the desire" is a negative freedom, where the positive freedom is embodied in an idea of real self-determination (1995:p 184). Developing self-governance would form an alternative *purpose* to public life, an alternative to emotionally stimulate the self through for example the arts or immediate fulfilment of desires.

The discourse of dramaturgical public life

Richard Sennett's reading of the Simmelian construction of modern urban life can be summarised in what he refers to as the "…mask of rationality", addressing the prevalent rational and visual order of modern urban public life (2000:p 382). Emphasising how the urbanite turns inwards to rationally signifying to others he is harmless, as a way to settling the fearfulness associated with encountering strangers. The Sennettian conception of the Simmelian encounters is about self- representation, where the modern man reveals as much about himself for the other to identify himself with him, for the other to know that he is not going to do anything that will surprise him, not going to approach him, nor speak to him, giving consent to certainty as the given order and *criterion* for partaking. The prevalent urban life is according to Sennett a visual culture as opposed to an oral one (2000:p 382); the modern man gives clues based on his appearance for the other to know that he is like him. Being silent in the public is the norm. The mask of rationality functions as a means to decrease the amount of communication needed whilst out in the public (2000:p 382). *Identities* are constructed visually, based on what someone is or is not. This also frames the silent and visual *character* of public life.

Sennett (2002[originally published in 1977]) outlines an explanatory model for this change to a visual urban public culture, based on the rise of modernity and the general revelation of the self. He sets out how secularisation has contributed to making man and things subject to mystification, as opposed to being comprehendible as part of a pre-determined all mighty order of nature (2002:p 21). When man is mystified by having a personality, he also fears revealing himself to strangers and as such turns inwards and becomes self-focused. The rise of personality in the public realm contributed to a change of looking upon the Other and the stranger, who now is defined based on its deviant character (Sennett, 2002: p 191). The personality forms the focus and purpose for participating in public life, as all experiences depart from the self and others are conceived through the self. The

'self-focused' public is carried out through strategic avoidance. By visually decoding and by placing one another in categories in relation to the self, man does not have to involuntary reveal oneself to anyone. The Sennettian reading of modern urban public life suggests an underlying, specifically modern, fear of being seen through or of being seen into, and being involuntary revealed. A criterion for partaking in public life is as such a notion of certainty, by visually being in control to not be exposed or revealed, characterised by a fear of exposure.

The idea of the dramaturgical public life is based on a life among strangers on the terms of being strangers. The main principle of how the notion of the public can be evoked is through dramatisation, claiming that strangers can meet and engage each other by entering the public on different terms than the self-focused, in a sense putting on a different 'coat' which can be perceived as 'artificial' in comparison to the private self (Sennett, 2000:p 384-385). The *purpose* of public life is here to get in engaged in the Other, also with an objective to develop the self, in an aspiration of becoming self-governing. The dramaturgical conception is *characterised* by an active oral and bodily public life. This discourse suggests that one enters the public realm with specific "public skills" which contributes to transcending social inequalities, enabling encounters on the terms of social difference (Sennett, 2000; 2002). *Identities* are constructed beyond visually determined social categories, by having moved away from "decoding what you see" to being sensitive to "what you hear". This conception relies on daring to expose the self, and being ready for the unexpected, which becomes the criterion for partaking. This "dramaturgical" approach for understanding public life is thematically aligned with Erving Goffman works, particularly in "The presentation of self in everyday life" (1959) where Goffman makes the connection between the enactments in public life and theatrical performances.

Sennett does not however rule out this notion of public existing in contemporary cities, and refers to the border zones as the areas where this conception of public life is taking place, where people have to get engaged with each other to master the fact of 'being there', where rational visual decoding is not enough because people do not know where and how to place each other (Sennett, 2000: p 386). These border zones can be characterised as incomplete, imperfect and uncertain where different groups of society bodily, visually and orally enact their relative differences. Institutional society and spatial planning practice can however pose a threat to this existing public life by entering and 'tidying' these spaces with their governing ideals, values and norms as expressed for example in the safety discourse, rather than opposed to accepting them as edges of 'conflicts' and uncertainties.

These conflicts and uncertainties provide the point of departure for an alternative construction of public life which is going to be explored next.

The discourse of conflictual public life

The conflictual public life as here represented in the writing of Hannah Arendt conceptualises public life as political life. Arendt departs from conceiving human beings to be pluralist in nature, and believes all human beings are capable of taking on new perspectives and actions, and "...they will not fit a tidy and ordered society unless their political capacities are crushed" (Canovan, in Arendt, 1998:p xii). The self-repressive aspects of modern public life is considered hindering people to realise their potential as political human beings. Political is understood as "…an ability to act", an ability to initiate new beginnings (Arendt, 1998:p 9). Society imposes rules and systems for "…normalising" and conforming man, making him unable to spontaneously act, controlling him insofar that he is unable to hear and see the Other. He is "…imprisoned" in the subjective self (Arendt 1998: p 40-41, p 58). Benhabib stresses how Arendt advocates the rise of the social and modern public space has generated "…a pseudo space of interaction in which individuals no longer "act" but "merely behave" as economic consumers, producers and urban city dwellers" (Benhabib, 1992: p 75). Arendt is arguing that man is unable to lead a free, and real self-determined life with others. This is the Hegelian notion of positive freedom (Taylor, 1995: p 185).

Arendt divorces the public from that of the social and the intimate, and speaks of 'public' as the space where man doesn't have to speak through his societal position or a predetermined identity, but rather through a political identity which is free and equal(Arendt 1998:p 32). Political *identities* are not according to Arendt a priori defined based on for example what social group you belong to. They are performed and intersubjectively negotiated through the appearance of a unique *who* (Bickford, 1995: p 316). The who is connected to Arendt's notion of plurality. Bickford conditions Arendt's concept of plurality in two ways; first it is who you are which is unique, *not what* you are; second all human beings share this uniqueness (Bickford, 1995: p 316). Plurality is interpreted existentially not essentially, meaning that plurality is a human condition, but should not be taken for granted as it can disappear with for example tyranny or mass society (Bickford, 1995: p 316). Arendt's construction of public life can be interpreted to be about principles of phenomena, rather than partial perspectives. Partial perspectives of phenomena upheld through static identities, such as ethnicity, gender or race, contributes to the formation or sedimentation of unequal power relations; it is discussion based on principles that can evoke real action and change, understanding identity as active and interactive. *Identities* are constructed politically rather than socially. By for example speaking about safety particularly from the perspective of women, contributes to sedimenting the notion of women as a particularly vulnerable group in society, rather than politically empowering them as equal human beings. The conditions for the conflictual public life are blocked by reducing the unique "who" to a stereotypical "…representation of others who look and sound like [yourself]" (Brickford, 1995:p 318).

Arendt points out how the meaning of public life lies in the presence of multi-perspectives, different mind sets and views, comprising conflicting positions and agony, including the impossibility of a common denominator (Arendt, 1998: p 57). Conflictual public life is as such *characterised* by active oral activities, rather than visual passiveness and includes first a notion of seeing each other as equals of the human race (Arendt, 1998:p 32). Second, it includes an ability to exist in uncertainty, to accept alienation and the differentiation of experiences and views (Arendt 1998: p 57, 181). These form the *criteria* for partaking in conflictual public life. The public is conceived as the space where it is possible to move beyond self-interest and not being biased with affective private relationships and views, and to accept the plurality of things and ideas where *identities* are interactive and constantly negotiable. To live a life only in the private and social sphere of certainty is not considered a "full life", as it is through uncertainty and alienation man is open to the world around him (Arendt, 1998: p 57). It is only by equally encountering and spatially facing the other that one is able to rationally think and speak, and most importantly act. This forms the *purpose* of public life, being able to independently act. Arendt departs from an existentialist point of view, with the belief that man can only be fully realised in the public, as in the private realm man is tied and governed by partialities. The practice of organising and separating and upholding avoidance of the Other and the unwanted constitutes in many ways a threat to the public Arendt is speaking of, as it contributes to the interior refuge and settlement of a fear of exposure.

The conflictual public space does furthermore not lend itself to rationally and spatially to 'be planned for', as public space can be anywhere and everywhere and at any time, and it does not require any specific spatial characteristics or attributes. Instead, the criteria for the public space sits with man himself and his interactions with others.

An alternative and opposite notion to the conflictual public life is the consensual public life as the governing means of a political public life, here expressed by Habermas and his idea of rational communication as a means for achieving consensus in a pluralist public.

The discourse of consensual public life

Another way of thinking about the negativity associated with the Simmelian rational urban public life is thinking of public life as an activity which privileges rational speech and common action, outlined in the writings of Jürgen Habermas (The structural transformation of the public sphere, 2006 [originally published in1962]). Similar to the conflictual model, the consensual approach shares the idea of the public based on the ability to rationally speak beyond the self in the forming of public consensus, in other words based on an active, exteriorly orally *characterised* public life. Such public life characterises rational conversation as being about principals of phenomena. In a

conversation about safety should one's own safety not be in focus where one relates back to the self, but rather on what principles 'safety' is founded upon- in other words, what is safety. It draws from an ability to detach oneself from the self and engage in critical discussion. The Habermasian consensual public life does not like the conflictual model rule out the private or the social sphere as possible spheres for the public, believing in man's capacity of detaching himself from his self and engaging in rational conversation. Public life is as such understood democratically that everyone affected by "…societal norms and collective political decisions" should be able to engage in reasoned discourse striving towards consensual agreements (Benhabib, 1992: p 87). Rational conversation forms hence a *criterion* for partaking in this conception of public life. The *purpose* of public life is here to be able to partake in reasoned discourse outside the self, as a means to contribute to consensual driven action. Being engaged in common action is considered to generate individual political identity and agency (Taylor, 1995: p 214).

The consensual discourse argues how the prevalent modern public life has been reduced to the realm of the intimate, where 'the self' has become the focus and the realisation of 'the self' an ideal for experiencing freedom (Dahlkvist, in Habermas, 1988:p xxi). Habermas explanatory model for this change relates to the rise of mass society, where 'the system' started to intervene in the 'private sphere' through for example social politics and financial regulations, a kind of "…colonisation of the life world" (Dahlkvist, in Habermas, 1988: p xix). In parallel to this, the system started to intervene in the life world, where so called private matters became questions of state politics (Dahlkvist, in Habermas, 1988: p xix). Habermas claims that the private and public interests hence have merged into one big pot, where the new public consists of "one consuming public" as opposed to "a reasoning and critical public". Public opinion is *produced* as opposed to *formed* (Dahlkvist, in Habermas, 1988:p xxii). Produced as in unreflected, unmediated by discussion and critique, and passively internalised throughout generations (Taylor, 1995: p 187). The formed public opinion as present in the consensual public life, is on the other hand a product of reflection, arising from rational conversations and results from an actively produced consensus (Taylor, 1995: p 187).

Agonistic conceptions of public life

Based on these different constructions of public life, it is possible to discern different approaches to the introduced themes, regarding purpose and character of public life, as well as criteria for participation and conception of identities in public life. The thematics are constructed differently in all discourses, but it is possible to recognise shared principles in conceptualising phenomena. These shared principles will be outlined as dimensions to which constructions of phenomenon will depart to different extents. It is not a matter of dichotomously either or, but rather discursive positions in the dimension between two points. These dimensions then serve as lines of political conflict in spatial planning, and

more specifically in the 'planning for safety'. Depending on how one politically chooses to construct, for example, the purpose of public life, forms the basis for how to frame the problem of perceptions of fear, and furthermore what solutions may be considered possible.

Purpose: Emotional self- Self governing

The first line of conflict includes the dimension of the conceived purpose of public life, which can on the one hand be conceptualised as stimulating the emotional self in an introverted way. The rational public life sets out how the subjective and emotional self should be protected against "the dangers" in the world but yet be stimulated through emotional arousals, through for example art or emotional excitement. On the other hand sits the purpose of public life as a means for becoming a self-governing individual through interpersonal communication as present in both the conflictual and consensual public life, or as a means to get by in the dramaturgical conception. This interpersonal encounter represents meeting the Other on the terms of the public, rather than the terms set by an idea of the self. These interpersonal encounters and the self-governing individual do on the other hand have different ends depending on what discourse of public life one is drawing from. The consensual logic is that through interpersonal communication a universal consensus can and should be achieved, which ultimately leads to active communal action. The conflictual logic is that there is no desired or predicted "end" to the interpersonal communication of which consensus is an example. The aim is instead the action forward itself, which is considered inherent to interpersonal political discourse between conflicting parts. By relating the dimension back to the 'planning for safety'; safety can be considered a solution in a public life whose purpose and point of departure is the emotional self, where the self has to be protected and safeguarded.

Character: Passive- Active

The second line of conflict includes the dimension of the conceived character of public life. The conflictual and consensual discourse critique the passive character of rational public life, where individuals are unable to form decision on their own and passively consume values and ideas. This stands in conflict to the conflictual conception characterised by the active subject and the desired action. The rational public life is also critiqued for being passive in terms of how people act in public. The dramaturgical conception sets for example out how people "appear" as opposed to actively "be" in the public; passively appearing as one among many people in a congregation of people, but yet hidden in the subjective self. This difference in character can also be explicated by on the one side representing a visual order and on the other side an oral order. The dramaturgical public life outlines for example how visual judgement of the other, quietness and the silent agreement of the right not to be spoken to is governing the self-focused passive public life. The active public life is on the other hand primarily an oral order, where judgment and decisions are

based on interaction and discourse with one another. Can the focus on safety be considered a consequence of a public life characterised by silence and passiveness?

Criteria: Certainty- Uncertainty

The third line of conflict departs from conceived criteria for being able to participate in public life. The rational public life sets out a fundamental criterion for taking part in public life based on expectations of certainty, by being able to interpret how people at large are going to react and behave, by being able to visually decode and categorise people based on appearance. This desired criterion of certainty relates ultimately to protecting and safeguarding the self. This should be set against the conflictual and dramaturgical conception, where uncertainty, understood as a human condition, is comprehended as a pre-requisite for partaking in public life, where exposing the self could be considered a criterion for enabling interpersonal interaction. Can 'planning for safety' be considered desirable in a public life where certainty forms a criterion for participating?

Identities: Social- Political

The fourth line of conflict includes conceptions of identities. The conflictual public life advocates for example how fixed social categories, such as gender and ethnicity are not a valid political identity. Political identities are considered on the other hand to be actively produced or performed. Constructions of identities relate to how we perceive communities and ultimately the stranger. Communities based on stable or fixed identities and where the stranger is constructed based on deviating from community norms and visual appearance could be considered a consequence of passive public life. The stranger who is on the other hand constructed based on possibilities of what we can be and do is considered a consequence of active public life. The stranger is constructed beyond social differences, and ultimately epitomises political public life. Can 'planning for safety' be considered to depart from stereotypical constructions of the stranger, or even contribute to emphasising them?

Resistance and re-politicisation

These established agonistic dimensions raise lines of political conflict and serve as a conceptual arena of choice making. Choice making in terms of choices made within specific planning discourses such as safety planning; what stance on public life is embodied and produced when proclaiming safety, and what notions are rejected? But also, choice making in terms of opening up for the ability in *choosing* what conception of public life ("we" believe) should ideologically govern the development of ("our") cities? As this choice is not given it should according to the Mouffean logic be subject to political deliberation and struggle in striving to reach agonistic consensus, where alternatives continue to remain present and vividly challenging the established order. This is crucial since depending on how public life is conceptualised brings about different consequences for spatial planning.

If stimulating the emotional self forms the purpose for partaking in public life, then planning solutions will be steered to reach such aims by enabling for example aesthetic experiences and the ability to follow the desire. Consequently and by taking it to the other extreme, if the purpose would be to become self independent, other planning solutions would be considered necessary. What assumptions and discursive positions of public life spatial planning rests on require of course further analysis, but every choice generates consequences and has socio-spatial implications. We therefore must first agonistically agree on what notion of public life should govern the development of our cities, and thereafter discuss what the consequences would be for planning.

This analysis of conceptual stances of public life has shown that it is possible to think beyond the currently prevalent conceptualisation of public life. Public life is not a given entity but an agreed upon order, which undoubtedly is slow to change and persistent in character, but inherently political in nature. There is as such space for resistance and *the political.*

Conclusion

This paper sets out how planning for safety is legitimised morally, by explicitly departing from everyone's right to be safe in the public realm. By drawing from Mouffean political theory(2005), the interpretation of human rights, or specifically 'the right to be safe in the public realm' is not a given but rather subject to different interpretations depending on the point of reference and assumption of public life, and is consequently inherently political. The notion of 'safe public realms' which planning indirectly aspires to through planning for safety includes also a specific urban order which is exclusionary per definition, as every order is based on some form of inclusion and exclusion (Mouffe, 2005:p 18). This article has sought to enable conceptual resistance towards the prevailing order by having made visible alternative constructions of public life which could form the point of departure for political struggle. The article has thereby established a discursive field that can be described as representing a conceptual context of public life, from which institutions such as spatial planning can make active choices concerning values and ideals that should characterise public life, where safety may or may not be included as an element. The discursive field was represented by four different discourses centered around rational, dramaturgical, conflictual and consensual public life. In the discursive field it was possible to discern lines of political conflict based on a thematic of purpose, character, criteria for participation and conception of identities. These lines of conflict were established as dimensions of constructing phenomena from which active political choices can be made. By re-enabling choice, it will be possible to deliberate conceptual alternatives and agonistically agree on what conception of public life should govern the development of cities.

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