At present, public space has become a critical issue for several reasons. On the one hand, there are arguments in favour of its political uses, and against its privatization; on the other hand, there are arguments for its safety, proposing zero tolerance policing, its privatization and similar solutions as remedies for the future. These arguments are repeated and can be termed ‘people’s right to the city’ and ‘securing safety in the city’, respectively. While the former arguments tend towards the political, finding in public space a democratic necessity for citizens in the city, the latter arguments often hinge on consumption, trying to turn the contemporary city into an attraction for tourism and investments.
Given the ambivalent constitution of public space – the contingency of its openness, making diversity possible – there is nothing surprising in these opposing arguments. However, they are in important respects significant to the contemporary urban situation, despite constituting the openness of public space much earlier, already in the 19th century. In the present article, I will first trace the ambivalence of public space historically, as a question of political economy as well as everyday use. Subsequently, the terms to be used for the proposed diagnosis of contemporary public space – between pleasure and virtue – will be introduced, followed by a discussion of how the diversity of public space is constituted. The diagnosis, then, will be cast in more general observations of the Post-Fordist European city, and particularly in more specific observations of what is going on today in the central business district of Stockholm. Given the proposed diagnosis, the challenge is to find a reasonable balance between pleasure and virtue.

The ambivalences of public space
The ambivalences of public space are constituted by its openness. In this section, I trace these ambivalences in a series of steps. The section ends with a discussion of diversity in public space in terms of its uses and users.

Economics and politics
Public space was a crucial component in the making of the economic city of the 19th century. One exemplum of this is Hausmann’s rebuilding of Paris.\textsuperscript{1} While Lindhagen’s plan for Stockholm is an interesting successor here due to its specific implementation conditions, Hobrecht’s plan for Berlin may be seen as a critical case owing to its difficulties in obtaining enough public space.\textsuperscript{2}

At the heart of these regularization schemes was the opening of the city to private economic exchange. This implied that planning was dominated by an economic rationale, the aim of which was summarized in the single word ‘movement’.\textsuperscript{3} The whole city was to be opened to the free movement of goods and people between sites of consumption, production and distribution. While these sites constituted the city’s private spaces, the movement of goods and people was to take place in the city’s public spaces. Thus, streets and squares were meant to bind together different private activities, not only within the whole city, but also between the city and its Hinterland – hence the importance of harbours and railway stations in

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item On movement in planning, see Sheiban: Den ekonomiska staden, 66f
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these regularization schemes. The implementation of these schemes aimed not only at opening the whole city to the movements of the market by binding it together horizontally through a network of streets, but also at evening out the uneven street profiles – all in an attempt to speed up the circulation of goods and people.

The implications of this are manifold. First, it should be noted that regularization was the opposite of privatization of public space, that is, making private space public, not just by cutting through old blocks with new streets, but foremost by laying out new streets, squares and parks in as yet unbuilt parts of the city. There were also important differences in how regularization was implemented in different cities – for example, not laying out enough public space (streets) in Berlin gave this city huge, and very deep, blocks, the upshot of which was that many public activities did not directly face the streets, but were interiorized into the block. However, here I want to point particularly at a characteristic ambivalence of public space: this space was primarily intended and designed for private, economic activities.

This was obvious when looking at the city in its entirety, but easily noticeable at the street level too. Where the private city block met the public street, the public-private border was being perforated. Thus, in the new shopping windows, goods were being displayed for the passers-by in the street; moreover, this was a means for inviting customers to enter the shop and select some of the displayed goods. In David Harvey’s words: ‘It was the symbiotic relation between the public and the commercial spaces that became crucial. The spectacle of the commodity came to dominate across the private/public divide...’ Café’s, restaurants and many other services operate across the same border – and in similar ways as well.

Now, if public space in the 19th century was conceived primarily for private, e.g. economic, activities, what about political activities? There are at least two answers to this question, one representative, one unruly. The representative answer tells about regularization as a means to also display, to the public, in public space, the new bourgeois order, more or less monumentally. Hausmann’s Paris is a good example of this, as is Vienna with its Ringstrasse. This answer also tells about representing the nation in the capital by naming streets and squares after its geography.5 The unruly answer, however, tells rather about politics – that is, street politics – as an unintended consequence of the 19th century city. This politics, be it in the form of riots or strikes, was not only unintended because it was unwanted by the social forces in command of the regularization plans, but also because this politics, from below, was the unplanned consequence of public space being in principle open to all, even those not yet enfranchised, but serving to bring them together. Indeed,

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One purpose of regularization was precisely to inhibit this kind of politics.\textsuperscript{6} This further helped to underwrite the ambivalent nature of public space.

**Mundane uses**

Public space thus constituted was to become an ambivalent space. This also became visible in its mundane uses at the street level. Though not formulating this explicitly as an ambivalent phenomenon, both Simmel and Goffman have made important contributions here.

To Simmel, life in the big city street is a demanding experience for the urbanite. First of all, it has to be recognized that, as posited by Simmel, leading this life entails an ambivalence between physical proximity, on the one hand, and social distance, on the other. More generally, Simmel recognizes, in spatial terms, a characteristic interaction between proximity and distance.\textsuperscript{7} Thus, in modernity, intimate life is also possible across huge physical distances, while physical proximity in urban public space makes it more or less necessary to keep a social distance to all who are passing by. This ambivalence is elaborated by Simmel in his metropolis essay. It corresponds to an elementary form of socialization resulting in a specific disposition towards urban life. This disposition is a strained one; it revolves around an inner tension within the subject regarding handling the excess of mobile impressions in the street. Maintaining social distance is required to deal with the proximity to all the strangers one is meeting. At the centre of this disposition is ignorance. Yet there is more to it than just ignorance, as Simmel speaks not only about aversion here, but also about sympathy. In other words, the disposition is a dynamic one and it may be bent in different directions.\textsuperscript{8}

Turning to Goffman, first we may note that the whole of his sociology of encounters is situated in public space – private life remains secret in his analysis of social interaction.\textsuperscript{9} Now Goffman learns that, in the flux of the street, the actor has to navigate. This implies an interaction form that allows people to live separate lives together – in parallel – scanning the behaviour of others, while externalizing one’s own intentions. Normally, this interaction is non-verbal. The point is to respect the anonymity of the other, which Goffman calls civil inattention. This presupposes normal appearances, ‘that it is safe and sound to continue on with the activity at

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\textsuperscript{6} Much has been written about this, but for an overview, see Hobsbawm, E. J.: The age of capital 1848-1875. London: Abacus 1977, chap. 12. For a local example: Maderthaner, Wolfgang & Lutz Musner: Die Anarchie der Vorstadt. Das andere Wien um 1900. Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus 1999.

\textsuperscript{7} Simmel, Georg: Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung (= Gesamtausgabe Band 11). Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 1992, 716-722, 742-748.


hand with only peripheral attention given to checking up on the stability of the environment.’ There is, however, just a fine line between this trust and all the basic threats that testify to the vulnerability of life in public space, that is, ‘all the basic dangers inherent in co-presence: physical attack, sexual molestation, robbery, passage blocking, importunity, and insult.’

This fine line makes public space into something ambivalent for Goffman too. You may routinely take civil inattention by others for given, yet it would be naïve never to see any risks in public space. Goffman, however, also gives civil inattention another, more positive twist; it is possible to break public anonymity, making acquaintances there too. This, however, cannot be done in a direct way, the risk of which is that it may be taken as a threat; contact must rather be achieved by addressing the other more indirectly, using some laconic remark, for example.

My argument now is for the affinity between Simmel’s ignorance and Goffman’s civil inattention. Neither ignorance nor civil inattention is a stable state, instead they are both ambivalent states; thus change is possible from within both of them. Moreover, the ambivalence of both states emanates from the ambivalence of public space itself, largely owing to its openness – an openness to both different social categories and different social uses. Or in the words of Detlev Ipsen: ‘It is the same reality of urban life that evokes curiosity as well as fear.’

Between pleasure and virtue

Today, public space has become a critical public issue; its ambivalences have fuelled its politicization in significant ways. On the one hand, we find those arguing for the openness of public space, for all people’s right to use it; this argument revolves around public space as a democratic value – particularly for those who lack access to other political arenas. Against this genuine political argument, on the other hand, we have a more economic argument, revolving around the attractiveness of urban space and its use for more private pleasures. The point of the latter argument, however, is not primarily whether this space is kept public, but whether it is safe enough. Consequently, this argument may favour the privatization of public space or the exclusion from such spaces of certain social categories, or social uses, in favour of that which is promoted as attractive. Though not foregrounding the political importance of public space, this is also, of course, a political argument. My point now is that such arguments have different implications for urban citizenship and, thus, for public space.

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On the one hand, we find an active, republican citizenship. Keeping distance and respecting others – not seeing them as simple means or objects for my own interests – are, to the republican, civic virtues. How people choose to live their life is important, yet even more important is that they do make such choices, and have opportunities to do so. This civic virtue is a crucial part of engaged citizenship, which entails being interested in taking the standpoints of others, listening to and learning from them, in a spirit of sympathy. In short, taking an interest in and assuming responsibility for public issues are crucial. Acts of civil disobedience presuppose such a republican citizenship.

On the other hand, we find a passive, (neo)liberal citizenship (or just a consumer). This view foregrounds negative, individual rights or freedoms. This citizen, however, is more an economic than a political actor, who puts his or her faith in the private market before political, collective solutions. Rarely discussed specifically in relation to public space, this citizenship view nevertheless has spatial implications. In my interpretation of this view, it is consumption not production that is to be related to public space. Moreover, consumption may take place directly in public space, or in premises directly facing it. Furthermore, consumption in public is about pleasure – or better, about different pleasures. Consequently, there is nothing ascetic about this (neo)liberal citizen, at least not in public space.

The point I wish to make is that the ambivalences of public space noted above – between economics and politics as well as between fear and curiosity – come together today in an ambivalent view of the urban citizen as located between virtue and pleasure.

Though virtues can be played out against pleasures in urban space – which there are many examples of in modern urban history – they can also be joined in different ways. At least according to the republican view, there is no contradiction between civil virtues and public pleasures: politics and play can come together in street performances, for example. For the republican, taking an interest in others also entails respecting new ways of appropriating public space by, e.g., skateboarding and similar practices.

While, in principle, the liberal citizen view respects all citizens as equals, in practice this cannot be the case – at least not when the citizen is reduced to a consumer, the worth of which, as we know, may depend on his or her purchasing power. Indeed, money is still ‘a sign of individual excellence’. And this is the case to a greater extent in the Post-Fordist than in the Fordist city, the mass consumption of which

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tical citizen as consumer.

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has been replaced by the branded life-style shopping and public consumption, more or less glamorous, of the Post-Fordist city. Moreover, its exclusionary practices are primarily directed against those citizens who do not ‘fit in’ because they lack the purchasing power to use its commodified pleasures (attractions).

Who’s diversity?
What distinguishes public space from most other spaces of the city is its diversity – particularly the diversity of its more central parts. This diversity is the other side of the openness of this space, the fact that it is not shut off to specific uses or users. To understand how this diversity is being constituted, we have to see it in terms of at least two dimensions. While the first dimension concerns how public space is used, the second dimension concerns what social categories actually use it.

To understand the first dimension, I propose that we look at the intensity of the use of public space. At the low end of the continuum, we find passing public space – space that is used for transport. Goffman’s navigation rules deal with this basic passing function. A little further along on the continuum, we may stop our movement, resting in public space, for shorter or longer periods; resting enables, first, a better overview of what is taking place around us, as well as more direct interaction with others. Passing and resting are the fundamental uses found in most public spaces, corresponding to their double spatial function of place and link.16 Moving further up the continuum, we find appropriations of public space and, finally, its monopolization. Appropriation is the most difficult concept here. Lefebvre discusses appropriation of space as a transformative or creative praxis, working in opposition to the space’s redominant use (normally passing).17 Appropriation implies new uses. Sometimes they are resisted, sometimes accepted. A good example of the latter is found in the recent sportification of public space, whereby roller-bladers and skateboarders reunite expressive bodily practices and public space – in contrast to the mono-functionality of the sporting ground.18 Monopolization of use, finally, causes public space to crumble almost by definition. Ironically, this may also happen when public space is dominated by a single use, most commonly car transport, but also when it is appropriated exclusively by, for example, drug dealers or skinheads. Consequently, in this dimension, diversity is increased by each appropriation of public space given its use for passing and resting. Perhaps such public spaces are the ones we value most. Yet the intensification of uses probably

also serves to intensify the ambivalences; thus we can expect some kind of upper limit to the diversity of public space beyond which there is an excess of diversity. Of course this limit is negotiable. Now, as diversity is being intensified through the multiplication of uses, the balance between sympathy and aversion, in Simmel’s terms, is becoming increasingly strained. Consequently, for this to succeed, a reasonable balance between pleasures and virtues must be kept.

In the other dimension, we recognize a diversity of users. Of course, there is a relationship between uses and users; yet analytically the two dimensions can be kept apart. A diversity of people using public space does not only mean that many different social categories are using it, but also that their presence is visible and recognized in situ. If public space works well – inclusively and according to its democratic ideals – such diversity is not a problem, and there are usually no problems associated with increasing it. This is not to be taken for granted, however. Public space has long been an important arena for openly demonstrating antipathies, be they sexist, racist, ageist, or of any other kind; of course, it has also been an arena for contesting such oppressions. Moreover, such aversions, directed at other social categories, are often triggered simply by competition for the right to use public spaces according to one’s own interests, when such spaces are a scarce everyday resource. The larger diversity of this kind that a public space can manage, the more inclusive the public space in question is. This management is more a question of civic virtues than of pleasures, however. For inclusion to be successful, particularly if it is to be expanded, it is important that civic virtues not only be tolerant, keeping aversions under control, but also more solidary, showing an interest in the other. This points towards what is political in public space and towards republican citizenship.

Answering the question of how diverse public space is requires that we combine these two dimensions. As this is no easy question to answer, let me end this section with the more simple observation that inclusion implies an intensification of ambivalences and thus also of the strains between pleasures and virtues. Accordingly, inclusion is no easy task, but more of a prolonged struggle.

Putting the present in perspective

If we are to reach a diagnosis of public space today, we must first put the city of the present in perspective. I will do this through three observations and a warning. First, we must note that much of the contemporary urban debate is grounded in a critique of the Fordist, or social, city, a critique that began in the 1960s. At the heart

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of this critique was how modernist urban planning helped to reshape our cities, destroying diversity, producing large mono-functional areas, all connected by a huge automobile traffic system. While the suburbs were designed for consumer privatism, much of the public space was adapted to speeding up the traffic flow. Production of the Fordist city, at this historical juncture, also gave rise to a sense of loss – a loss of urban qualities, of the mixed city.23

This brings me to the second observation. This sense of loss, in its turn, produced a counter-ideal to the Fordist city, the mixed city, full of vibrant public life in the streets. This counter-ideal helped to set off a gentrification process, starting in old inner-city working class quarters, in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, by giving then new meaning. The new social movements were part of the process, trying to rescue many quarters from demolition and the construction of new motor ways. Thus, the first steps were taken towards the Post-Fordist city.24

Yet, and this is my third observation, the Post-Fordist city project received its economic impetus at the earliest in the 1980’s – the 1970’s being a kind of interregnum in urban history when the future of big cities was the subject of great dispute25 – much owing to the neo-liberal take-off at the time. The gentrification process already under way helped to give this take-off some direction. Even more important, though, seems to have been the substitution of the welfare state’s social city with the policies of the entrepreneurial or economic city, the aim of which was to generate economic growth. Thus, one tried to turn the city into an instrument of growth in new ways – the social city was, of course, also a growth instrument, but through Keynesian economic policies. From this point onwards, cities were seen as competing with each other, on a global scale, for investments and well-to-do residents. These new approaches became a particularly salient feature of developments in old industrial cities hit by crisis. Branding the city to make it attractive became crucial in this atmosphere of competition. The implications of this for public space cannot be underrated, as many of these efforts were aimed at redesigning city spaces for public consumption of urban pleasures. In conjunction with these efforts, safety in public space was turned into a critical issue, signalling the undesirability of the presence of marginal people.26

23 What was lost was formulated succinctly by Jane Jacobs: The death and life of great American cities. New York: The Modern Library 1993
Finally, there is a highly pessimistic narrative of the history sketched above, which ends in almost all public spaces being privatized, and all people without the money to use them being excluded. In short, the result is a totally divided city. The warning here is for the Anglophone bias in this narrative. It is an open question how relevant this narrative is to European cities, regardless of how often it is retold in (Anglo-American) urban studies.27

Issues of public space in contemporary CBD in Stockholm

There are too many public spaces in use to say anything general about them. Besides much discussed places like Times Square, Tiananmen Square and Potsdamer Platz, thousand of places known almost exclusively by their everyday uses proliferate. To say something more substantial about public space, I will take us to the CBD (Central Business District) in contemporary Stockholm. But let me start with an historical note to put this in perspective.

A divided CBD

From the late 19th century, the central parts of Stockholm have been divided into two halves, one popular half to the west of the Brunkeberg ridge, one fashionable to the east. The huge modernist renewal project in the post-WWII decades demolished most of the western part; its use, however, was not changed significantly, though the mix of administrative and commercial uses was largely put to an end. South of the sunken plaza, Sergels torg, offices for the expanding welfare state were constructed, and to the north of it, shopping streets and department stores for consumption were built. Here the Fordist city took full shape. In the late 1980s, much of this was turned almost into a back-water. The coming of the Post-Fordist city became fully visible in the fashionable eastern part of the CBD. Around the square Stureplan, Stockholm’s glamour zone – comprising luxury shopping, the most fashionable offices and a glamorous night life – took shape in old city blocks, almost untouched by the modernist renewal project. Thus this old divide was accentuated. While the east witnessed the rise of a glamour zone, the sunken plaza Sergels torg was becoming stigmatized, a development that began in the 1970s when this square – the city’s most central and in terms of use most global square – was also turned into an icon of Stockholm’s drug traffic.28


In Stockholm, the Post-Fordist city was, until quite recently, primarily the result of entrepreneurial undertakings. In the 1980s, Kungsgatan was redesigned by the local street association consisting mainly of property owners, followed by the opening of Sturegallerian in 1989, also an act of entrepreneurial urbanism. Investments in the CBD have followed this private pattern. Moreover, public-private partnerships have been quite rare in the CBD, largely depending on the fact that most properties of the huge renewal project were expropriated by the municipality, turning them into site leaseholds, which blocked such engagements until the beginning of 2007. Beginning in 2007, however, the business association for CBD – City i Samverkan – was reorganized, among other things to break this deadlock.29

The struggle over Sergels torg

Sergels torg is probably the most central open space in Sweden. Most people just pass the square, yet since it was opened in the late 1960’s, it has been used frequently for political actions – from mass demonstrations to hunger strikes – often with a global outlook. It has also been used for spontaneous public celebrations of national sporting victories.30 Yet the image of this place is primarily associated with drug traffic, the centre of which Sergels torg has been for four decades now, the police having severe difficulties stopping it.

This helped to fuel the radical proposal for a complete renewal of Sergels torg by the new right majority immediately following its victory in the municipal elections in 1998. At the heart of the proposal was to build over the sunken plaza, lifting it, literally and symbolically, up to the street level, thus turning it into something more fashionable, in line with the developments of the eastern part of the CBD. For technical reasons, among other things, this proposal failed, thus ending the first round of the struggle over Sergels torg.31

A second round followed on the heals of this, however. Several interesting observations can be made here. If the sunken plaza was not to be lifted, then the shaded part of it could be acclimatized and commercialized by glassing it in, while leaving the open part of the square alone. This Town Hall proposal was intended to target drug traffic by lightening up the plaza’s dark underside. By glassing it in, new spaces would be created for commercial activities, which would also help the municipality finance the project. Thus, this project fits neatly into the critical picture of the privatization of public space.

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29 This is based on a series of interviews with leading representatives of City i Samverkan, conducted in 2008-2009 for the project ‘Who gets the right to the city; comparing governance and conflicts in the CBD of Stockholm and Gothenburg’ together with Nils Hertting and Catharina Thörn. For details about the interviews, see notes below where they are referenced.

30 While police permits are not sought for the latter, a survey of the permits for political meetings taking place in February, May and September 2005-2007 reveals the global character of Sergels torg.

31 This is the subject of ‘A weird politics of place. Sergels torg, Stockholm (round one)’ (cited above).
Moreover, one of the unintended effects of this project seems to be that Sergels torg is being threatened as a political space. According to an independent investigation, ordered and paid for by the municipality, one significant feature of Sergels torg today is that most political and other civic activities facing the passing public are taking place at the border between the daylight, open air part and the dark, inside part of the square – that is, exactly where the glass wall is to be constructed. Thus, it comes as no surprise that protests against the proposal have come from civil society.

Perhaps more surprising, though, is the response from the private sector. For City i Samverkan, the important thing is that something should be done in the case of Sergels torg to make the place safer and more pleasing. Without favouring the present proposal, they are nevertheless willing to accept it, just to improve the place. On the other hand, from the private side, it has also been suggested that another way to make the square safer and more pleasing would be to launch more cultural activities there. In Kulturhuset, which faces the southern edge of the square, there already exists a suitable public institution, in the hands of Town Hall, that would be able to accomplish such a thing.

Interestingly, this situation does not fall neatly into the pattern of the Anglophone theoretical view on the privatization of public space. It is primarily Town Hall that is interested in expanding commercial spaces to make Sergels torg more safe and pleasing, not because this solution is preferable in principle, but because it is the most realistic one economically. For City i Samverkan and similar interest groups, while they are worried about Sergels torg, making the CBD more attractive also means achieving a better mix of activities there. Thus, what is needed is not primarily more commercial spaces. In other words, Sergels torg’s fundamental political importance, as it has developed over the past forty years, is threatened more by the municipality than by private interests – despite the fact that if any organized group is expected to take an interest in public space generally, it should be the municipality. Its proposed solution threatens to tilt the balance between civic virtues and private pleasures in the direction of the latter. However, also this second round will probably be inhibited before its realization: a tramway line is to be constructed over the space to be glassed in, which will delay its realization for many years to come.

33 Interview with Per Eriksson (City i Samverkan) 21/1 2009.
34 Interview with Ken Sihver (former AP-fastigheter) 17/12 2008; Mattias Nygårds (Hufvudstaden) 19/12 2008.
The politics of small steps

There is no comprehensive blueprint for designing an attractive CBD in Stockholm. Though some larger projects have been launched – Sturegallerian being the most noteworthy consumption example – the upgrading of the CBD is taking place property by property, even shop by shop. This politics of small steps implies the cumulative upgrading of the area, mainly on a market basis. If there are any leading actors in this upgrading, it is the property owners, particularly the larger property companies. Their more concrete aims may differ, largely depending on the location of the property in question, yet if they have any Leitmotif for public space immediately adjacent to the property, this can be summarized using the words safe, clean and pleasing. Town Hall has no vision exclusively for the CBD, though their branding of Stockholm as ‘The capital of Scandinavia’ naturally also applies to this area. City i Samverkan, on the other hand, promotes the area by saying that it ‘shall always be worth a journey’. Though such promotion efforts may sound superficial, for both agents, the safe, clean and pleasing city is important. Indeed, joint efforts by Town Hall and City i Samverkan have been seen the past years in the context of the project ‘Stockholm Ren och Vacker’ (Stockholm Clean and Beautiful). Clearly then, some ideas are common to the leading actors in the CBD, most of whom are members of City i Samverkan.

This politics of small steps, continuously upgrading the CBD, seems to have unintended exclusionary tendencies. One example here is that, over the years, it has become increasingly difficult to find any location in the area for private and public actions for the homeless – despite the fact that such actions have been situated here for a very long time. For example, the voluntary organization Convictus’s open house for the homeless, Bryggan (The bridge), located behind the central station, in the former postal terminal, had to close down in 2007 because the property was to be remodelled into a luxury hotel, immediately facing Town Hall. Here, the homeless could find a shelter in the day time, get some food, have a shower, get a moment’s rest – much of what the rest of us take for granted – and help in case they needed to contact various authorities. Though the municipal social welfare service was given the task of finding a new premise for Convictus, they were unable to do so for over a year, and when they eventually did come up with one, the space was much smaller, making a full restart impossible. Though

35 I owe this term to my colleague Catharina Thörn.
36 Interview with Göran Langer (Diligentia) 8/12 2008; Mattias Nygårds (Hufvudstaden) 19/12 2008.
37 The branding of Stockholm is indeed meant to be an empty signifier, open to all who wish to contribute to the development of the Stockholm Region (http://www.stockholmbusinessregion.se, visited 17/8 2009). For City i Samverkan, these values are central to two of their three fields of action (Stadsmiljö & Trygghet), http://www.cityisamverkan.se, visited 17/8 2009. On the joint efforts: http://www.cityisamverkan.se, Newsletters: Stockholm Ren & Vacker 24/8 2007 and 5/3 2008.

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there is a not insignificant public possession of properties in the area, the process of upgrading came in between.38

More generally, and much in line with the Anglophone orthodoxy, the upgrading process, resulting in rising property values and, hence, more expensive rents for shops, is simultaneously also an exclusion process. This does not only hit all kinds of untrendy businesses: some of which are economically antiquated, though still able to target their customers. It also hits civil society undertakings, be they social or political. Seen in this perspective, the upgrading process produces not only a safer, cleaner and more pleasing city, it also reduces the diversity, or complexity, of the CBD. The exclusion process is nothing but a reduction process. Given the critique of the Fordist city, this outcome is ironic.

Moreover, this process helps to tilt the balance between virtues and pleasures too. And it does so in favour of pleasures. In short, in several respects, the CBD is becoming less and less an area for the actions of the republican citizen. The difficulty in keeping civil society undertakings permanently in the area is perhaps the most obvious observation here. Another observation is more troubling, however. Also this is a consequence of the reduction process, as it affects not only the mix of activities within the area, but also the diversity of the people using it. This, in a most literal sense, undermines citizens’ possibilities to get involved and to take an interest in other people, listening to and learning from them – in short, to commit themselves to public issues. If the balance between virtues and pleasures is tilted too much in direction of the latter, we will have, if worst comes to worst, a public space unrelated to public issues.

Security without safety

Now, the critical consequences of such a lack of citizen engagement and civic virtues do not only affect radical politics. On the contrary, they may also thwart central values of the democratic Rechtstaat – such as people’s willingness to bear witness in court. My point now is that the growing unwillingness to testify can be related – among other things – to the present development of public space resulting in private pleasures without civic virtues.

Though the refusal to witness has been recognized as a public issue today – at least in Sweden, witnessing is considered a duty – it has not been related to what is going on in public space, but rather it has been seen as a consequence of treats from organized crime directed at the people who have been called to witness, or as stemming from the defence of the kind of (male) honour that binds people together in silence against the intervention of external authorities, e.g. football companies.

38 Anna Gustafsson: ‘Oviss framtid för hemlösa’, Svenska dagbladet 21/8 2007, 7; Convictus 2008 (Annual report), 6f, 11.
fighting each other. My suspicion, however, is that there exists a much more general refusal or ability to testify. For example, many crimes are perpetrated in public space – with many passers-by as onlookers, but without any reliable witnesses to the incident. How can this be?

This has got to be related to the upgrading of urban space, more specifically to the very strong tendency to try to make the city, particularly the city centre, safe through the use of camera surveillance. This is no automatic development, of course, but depends on the substitution of the virtuous citizen-on-the-street’s eye with artificial surveillance. To put it more concretely, it happens when we tilt the balance of virtues and pleasures towards the latter.

For the citizen as consumer, the right to the city entails the right to have fun and be left alone. Seeing refusal to witness in court as a consequence of this is perhaps too strong a claim, but to take home the point, it suffices that the citizen as consumer does not even notice what is going on; this also renders him or her unable to witness. And why should we expect the citizen as consumer to observe anything that does not relate to him or her personally? Witnessing is often an unpleasant duty, and why bother when the cameras can do the job? In popular culture, particularly in recent crime stories, they often do this job. The fact that cameras can be left unloaded, do not pick up what is going on, or do not produce pictures of sufficient quality for perpetrator identification seems to come in second hand.\textsuperscript{39} It is in this way security without safety is being produced in and by the Post-Fordist city in conjunction with today’s popular culture; security technology is no guarantee for safety. In this way, trust and cooperation among citizens can be undermined.

Public space today

In conclusion, I want to make some more general remarks about public space today. I do this by positing that public space is a highly ambivalent urban phenomenon. In principle, public space is open to all, yet it opens the city primarily to economic exchanges; it evokes fears, but also our curiosity; it stimulates our pleasures, but does it require our civic virtues? Now, as we can observe based on developments in the CBD of Stockholm, the ambivalences of public space are being tilted in the direction of private space, of the pleasures of the Post-Fordist city and fear of, rather than curiosity about, the other. These remarks are intended to tilt the balance back a little, in favour of civic virtues. I think this is necessary today if we are to maintain public space as a political resource. This move is not meant to disregard or devalue

\begin{footnote}
Of course, this is an old problem, as witnessed by the famous Kitty Genovese case (see e.g. Johan Asplund: Essä om Gemeinschaft och Gesellschaft. Göteborg: Korpen 1991, 123-140). However, my point is that surveillance technology together with the consumption economy aggravates this problem.
\end{footnote}
the pleasures of public space, but to safeguard its basic democratic worth, which requires a better balance between pleasures and virtues.

**Basic uses and fundamental virtues**

However important the creative development of new pleasurable uses of public space, commercial or civic, may be, in conclusion I wish first to stress the significance of the basic uses of public space and some corresponding fundamental virtues: trust in and curiosity about strangers when passing and resting in public space. This may seem trivial, but it nevertheless points at what may be political – what may support democratic values – in our everyday public routines.

To underline this, let us venture into some of the lessons of 9/11 and its aftermath. Given the London experience, Les Back has argued cogently against a politics of fear and mistrust. Such a politics damages the choreography of life, he says, threatening not only our capacity to live side by side with strangers, sharing public space, on the bus, in the tube, or elsewhere. It also threatens our ability to identify real risks and danger, thus inhibiting the creation of a language that is able to counteract racism and terrorism. But to counteract this politics of fear and mistrust of the Phobocity, it is fundamental to come to terms with the perpetual sense of war and general alert shaped rather by politicians and journalists than by terrorists. In short, we had better stick to, and trust, the choreography of life of our everyday routines.  

40 In a pressing situation like this, the best we can do is to mobilize the highest of our civic virtues, not only to safeguard public space, but also to protect us from possible risks and dangers. If we are to live with the dangers of terrorism, urban life must be upheld, which means defending our most trivial routines of everyday life and their corresponding republican civic virtues. Unfortunately, I do not think the citizen as consumer is best suited to this, nor are the police.

**Defending ambivalence, defending public space**

Defending public space means defending openness, but also defending ambivalence. Demands for certainty and unambiguiousness – which is in fact what any zero-tolerance policy opts for – are thus not compatible with the open city. This does not mean that we have to put up with crime and civil intimidation, but rather that trying to protect ourselves once and for all from such nuisances may threaten the very choreography of life in the streets, of a livable city.  

42 Rhetorically, however,


41 Least of all, I think, do we need to develop any 9/11 urban paradigm for understanding our cities, as argued by H.V. Savitch: ‘Does 9·11 portend a new paradigm for cities?’. Urban Affairs Review. Vol. 39 (1) 2003, despite observations of how people in Jerusalem fought back on terrorism by returning as fast as possible to everyday life after several severe terrorist outrages.

42 Much of the critique of all kinds of utopian projects concerns this precisely. Speaking of choreography here reminds us, of course, of Jane Jacob’s description of what she called ‘The ballet in Hudson Street’ in The death and life of great American cities, 49ff, 66ff.
it may be easier to defend the open city rather than to defend the ambivalences of public space, though in practice they may boil down to the same thing.

What is difficult today seems to be to defend the openness or diversity of public space for all possible uses and users. Though certain spaces may be defended for their specific qualities, if they are threatened, there are no longer permanently organized interests that defend public space more generally; not even the municipality, as the owner of public space, can be relied on here. Surrounding most public space we find private spaces, that is, property owners and private businesses. If they cooperate, as they often do nowadays, they can make strong demands on the design and management of the public space in question. Paradoxically, then, local private interests often have the strongest say when it comes to a specific public space, particularly if they have a common outlook on what they want to do with it.43

Of course, public spaces can be defended one by one, from space to space. Yet a more general defense – or why not promotion – must be moulded in terms of civic virtues rather than pleasures, that is, politically. The balance between pleasures and virtues has to be readjusted. This is what makes the task so demanding – and necessary – today.


Mats Franzén – Between pleasure and virtue

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