

OTRYGGHETENS LANDSKAP

En kartläggning av otryggheten i stadsrummet och en analys av
bakomliggande orsaker, med fokus på mediernas roll

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Abstract

Urban Landscapes of Fear and Insecurity. The Mapping of Fear and Insecurity in Urban Public Spaces and the Analysis of Underlying Causes, with Focus on the Role of the Media.

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The aims of the dissertation are to explore and map the fear and insecurity in urban public spaces and to analyse the underlying causes behind the sensations of fear and insecurity in these spaces, with focus on the role of the media. The study is mainly based on survey data collected through regional samples of the population of West Sweden between the years of 2001–2007. But also data collected through quantitative content analyses of the two leading newspapers in the region 1950–2003. On a general level half of the threats expressed by people as the most serious to their own security concern crime, in particular crimes of violence. But an equally large part concern threats associated with social problems, different aspects of society, health and the environment and also international conflicts. On the specific level, people name the same types of places that are found in the theoretical frame by Koskela (1996) used to grasp the sensations of fear and insecurity in urban public spaces. The respondents mainly experience fear and insecurity when alone in spaces that are desolate. It does not seem to matter whether these types of spaces are of open or closed physical character. What is important is whether there are people there or not. The expressed degree of sensations are lower in open types of spaces like streets and squares, and even lower in spaces that are both open and populated like shopping centres and stations/terminals. People experience the least fear and insecurity in populated and physically closed spaces, such as restaurants and cafés. Hardly surprising the sensation is much lesser when together with friends and acquaintances, but more remarkable is the fact that the sensation is almost as low in all spaces, as long as there are many people there, which indicate that urban safety to its character is anonymous. The analysis suggests that there is a correlation between the degree of social control in the urban public space and the sensations of fear and insecurity. The lower the degree of social control, the higher is the degree of fear and insecurity. The analysis of underlying causes is done partly through hypothesis testing and partly through the use of regression analysis of the independent effects of three types of experiences of threats and risk and individual predispositions. Among the types of experiences victimisation of crime or other threats have the largest independent effect on the sensation of fear and insecurity in public spaces. But the effects are similar from having *observed* others become victims. Also of importance, especially in populated spaces, is having heard of threats and risks from friends or acquaintances. Experiences through the media are of minor importance for the independent effect on the sensation of fear and insecurity in public spaces, but the three ways of experiences combined enhance the sensation of fear and insecurity in public spaces. The main role of the media is through the perceptions the respondents have on media coverage on crime and media influence on their own and others experiences of threats and risks. Those that believe that media coverage on crime is underrated and/or believe that media influence experiences of threats and risks, have to a greater extent experienced fear and insecurity than those that believe that medias coverage of crime is coherent with reality or overrated and/or doesn't believe in media influence. Sex and age together with third-person-effects have the largest independent effects on the sensation of fear and insecurity in public space, but age in another way than expected. It's mainly the young rather than the elderly that have experienced fear and insecurity. But also personal anxiety and lack of generalised trust play an important role in the sensations, but neither independent of the context. All of the factors that influence the sensation are either added on or are subtracted from the sensation of fear and insecurity in the urban public spaces.

Keywords: risk society, late modernity, risk perception, mass communication, urban public space, sensations of fear and insecurity, threats, violence, fear of crime, social disorder, personal experience, social experience, media experience, personal predisposition, anxiety, social control, complexity, sex, gender, age, generalised trust, social capital, West Sweden, SOM-data, regression analysis, third-person-effect, third-person-effect-hypothesis, cultivation effects, agenda setting