BETWEEN BOTTOM-UP ACTIONS AND CIVIC DESIGN: SHARED DESIGN PROCESS FOR A SKATEBOARD URBANISM IN BARCELONA

Written by Louis Chapsal

Supervised by Francesca Frassoldati Submitted 16th of February 2021 Master course in Architecture Construction City

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Supervisor Prof. Francesca Frassoldati Candidate Louis Chapsal

Skateboarding recently turn into being more accepted by the public realm and the process is still ongoing, it is now an official sport in the Olympic games, a popular sport taught in some schools, universities, and communities for its health and social implications, among other valuable characteristics. The amount of skateparks has grown enormously as well as skateboarders of all gender and ages. It is important for architects and urban planners to document this growth and to understand what impacts this practice can have on our city and the skateboarding culture, so we can set new roles and priorities when it comes to integrating skateboarding in our cities. Skateboard also raises very important questions about the nature of public space, how it can be socially diverse and democratic, what is hostile urbanism and how public space is used, engaged, and lived. This thesis will focus on the city of Barcelona, a living and cosmopolite city, beloved by a high amount of skateboarders. Barcelona became famous for skateboard due to its public spaces; it is considered a legendary city for skaters particularly because it is fitted for street skateboarding.

My study will focus and how skateboarders in Barcelona negotiate their presence in the built environment and how that urban history could be translated into design strategies. To achieve this, it is important to recall how skateboard appeared in the street, what critiques it makes through performing in the street and why is it important that it remain in the street. Barcelona's fertile ground for skateboarding will be then investigated and specific case studies will be extracted as important spaces for the skateboarding culture and the city.

Actual genuine participatory and democratic process design are very hard to distinguish from the always more present profit-oriented ones. Barcelona likewise many other cities tend to institutionalize problematic urban practices in this mainstream Neo-liberal urbanism. At last but not least I present here possible strategies for Barcelona to, instead of driving from the top, help reinforce the skateboard community making it more diverse and at the same time opening them to a skate-friendly city.

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Skateboard urbanism as described by Julien Revelard:

The idea that planning can be infused by skateboarding and vice versa.

Skate spot:

Any, whether urban or rural, place with relevant mise en scène for skateboarding that was not designated/ thought/compose/designed/conceived exceptionally with skateboarding in mind.

Skateparks:

All kind of landscape that has been purposely built from a top decision for skateboarding and that is generally fenced as well as restrained to the practice of "action sport".

Spaces for Skateboarding:

Every place where spaces are produced by skateboarders whether formally or informally.

Nine centimeters above the ground, feeling each different surface of the city through my wheels, giving up the control of my body while being aware of my surrounding, drifting to get to the next Barcelona spot away from police made me think about this thesis.

I have always thought that skateboarding was strongly linked to architecture and urban design, that looking at the city with diverse lenses could be somehow interesting and provoking. When started writing this thesis. I discovered a great amount of research and books written by scholars who helped me clarifying what I had in mind. The first and probably most influential scholar that I found was Ian Borden and his book written in 2001, Skateboarding and the city (Figure 1). Ian Borden is a professor of Architecture and Urban Culture and Vice Dean of education in the Barlett, UCL - University College London – Faculty of built environment. He wrote intensively about many topics, from automobile to urban culture, but he mostly wrote on skateboarding. He is himself a forty years' experience skateboarder and advises on skateboarding culture and the design of skateparks. Skateboarding, Space and the city is dedicated to the history of skateboarding with the application of the thinking and the work of the French



Figure 1: Skateboarding, Space and the city by lan Borden

philosopher Henri Lefebvre. In 2019 he published a revision and reworked released expanded from this seminal book called Skateboarding and the City: A complete history. This new book is the culmination of thirty years of work and acknowledges and references many academic works published during the last twenty years after his first book was released. After Ian Borden, I discovered many more researchers from many fields, and especially the Pushing Boarders conferences were relevant to understand every debate and researches around skateboarding. Pushing Boarder is a skateboarding event that puts in discussion different bodies – Academics, organizations, skate-NGOs, journalists, pro-skaters - to talk about skateboarding. They are active since June 2018 and pushes what skateboarding is and what it could become in the future. Skateboarding is often described as a sport, an outcome of the tentative formalization of this new activity. In reality, skateboarding can't be only described by its competitive and physical character, it is an adaptation to the urban environment, and it is recognized by many to be a culture, with its rituals, its spots, and its practitioners. This thesis will avoid as much as possible the athletic aspect of skateboarding, with the skateboarding in the Olympics and the design of skateparks concerning that. It will focus on the urban adaptation aspect of skateboarding, on this playful activity that enunciates crucial critiques on our cities.

When I heard that skateboarding was forbidden in the street and most of the public squares of Barcelona, I thought that this was not right for a city often put at the center when it comes to skateboard. I thought that with the great number of skateboarders and how mainstream skateboarding has become, things would have been encrypted in the city, with more design and openness towards the community. It seems that skateboard urbanism has just started in Barcelona and could create in the future, hopefully, a skate friendly city.



FROM THE SEA

The first act of transgression and skate usage of urban space was done in the USA, where skateboarding was born. It is impossible to precisely trace the birth of skateboarding, academic such as Ian Borden clearly claims it as a mutation of the surf from the wave to the concrete which happened in California or maybe in Florida during the 60s, "Skateboarders in the '60s and '70s were commonly surfers, and used skateboards when the surf was flat" (Ian Borden, Raphaël Zarka, Michael Brooke, April Cylwil, Jacques Caroux, François Perrin among orthers).

Signs of skateboarding can be traced back to 1935, Raphaël Zarka (2009) stress that youngsters would tear roller skates into two pieces to screw wheels into a piece of wood and add up a handlebar made of a crate to construct their scooter. One youngster might have had the idea to remove the crate for practical reasons and thus creating skateboarding. As skateboarding was at its early stage and the technology was very basic, the use of the skate was mainly done on concrete waves, as a mobility device or reproducing what surfers do on the waves. "Cities thus suddenly, it seemed, obtained ocean-like forms [...] The modernist space of suburbia was found, adapted and reconceived as another kind of space, as a concrete wave". The Urban space is thus reproduced, as "Space is produced outward from the body"(Henri Lefebvre, 1974), "space is not a physical thing it's a performed thing, and it is performed by bodies and a tool, the skateboard and the architecture that the skateboarder relates against". (I. Borden.p33).

Skateboarders quickly started expanding their possibilities in the city, inclined banks of many Los Angeles schoolyards started to be the favorite terrain to be skated. They would ride the concrete bank reproducing what they were able to do on waves. In the 70's, the concrete backyard pool was discovered, it greatly added performance possibilities, and danger. Pools that are round, oval, or kidney-shaped were located mostly in residence and so were skated illegally, without the permission of a temporally absent owner. This design can be traced to Finland, home of the architect Alvar Aalto, who in 1938 designed and built the first swimming pool with a rounded floor in the shape of a kidney bean, an organic form inspired by his theory that architecture is part of biology (Trufelman 2017; Brian R Glenney and Paul O'Connor, 2019, p.4). Another terrain that appears to be propice for this practice were ditches and other large-scale water management projects, those were located often far away from the cities thus skaters had to act as explorers to find the best concrete wave to perform and most importantly, play. Those spaces feature common aspects, they are lost spaces, forgotten spaces that nobody cares about. Skaters rediscover them introducing their new spatial practice. "That these constructions were commonly located in the wastelands, deserts and forgotten spaces of the city was a condition which imbued them with an archaeological character – they appeared to be primeval material elements since forgotten by the inhabitants of the city." (I. Borden, 2001, p45) This is one of the elementary behaviors of skaters that explain how they interact with the city, and we will see that this behavior continues until now with street skateboarding. "Appropriation is not the simple reuse of building or space, but a creative reworking of its time and its space" (Henri Lefebvre, 1974, pp.166-9). The activity done by skateboarders is most of the time nomadic and sporadic, but sometimes it appears that they become residents and start redefining the first and most important function of the space.

Unlike surf that depends only on the sea to practice and thus will never be transgressive, skateboard's freedom and hedonism often face a wall: Private owned places. Those acts of transgression and many complaints from the public led to the construction of skateparks in many cities across the United States (Chihsin Chiu, 2009, p.27). Local government and city councils found this great alternative to prevent skateboarders from using private-owned space for their practice and therefore depriving them of the power to reclaim forgotten spaces. Those skateparks were constructed exaggerating part of the city like concrete banks becoming long concrete wave for example to create intentional skateboarding architecture. At first, because of a lack of communication, skateparks were not satisfying "Many early skatepark developers had never even seen skateboarders in action, and simply fabricated whatever was in their minds" (Horowitz "Radical", pp.120-1). This mistake was rectified and in May 1977 Pipeline was built (figure 2), considered to be the best skatepark so far, this skatepark simply copied a backvard pool. Made of reinforced concrete without any coping, the archetype of the Californian pool was thus integrated into a purpose-built space.

Pipeline became the reference after that, the backyard pools were replicated as a purpose-built space for skateboarders and were designed with a multitude of different shapes all other the World. This mimicking wasn't only copying the backyard pool but also Arizona pipelines project, Ditches, and other American architecture and civil engineering.



Figure 2: Picture of the Pipeline skatepark, 1978 , ronnsk8mag.

TO THE PUBLIC SPACE

Skateboarding in the US and parallel skateboarding in Barcelona had rollercoaster-like popularity. By the '80s, almost all the skateparks were destroyed or abandoned, due to a drop of skateboard practitioners. In the US it started in the '60s with a peak in 1965 and freestyle skateboarding, it then drops and by 1972-3, the popularity raised again with the introduction of an innovation: "The replacement of the clay, open-bearing wheels with new wheels made of polyurethane hot-poured into molds, and fitted with loose bearing held together by an adjustable cone system" (I, Borden, 2001, p.18) The second pick in popularity was way bigger than the first one and was in the late '70s with other 40 million skaters worldwide and the rising construction of skateparks. Then skateboard decreased in popularity at the beginning of the '80s and in 1989 nearly all the skateparks were destroyed (I. Borden, 2001 p73). Skateboarding is based on its practitioners and as with other activities when there are no more practitioners the purpose-built space has no more purpose. Skateparks are very exclusive spaces and can be used only by skateboarders, in that sense they lack flexibility and are left abandoned or destroyed if the users disappear. (Ocean Howell, 2001 p.4)

In parallel to this, a highly successful community called "Burnside project" (Portland, Oregon, 1990 onward) emerged as maybe the first DIY - Do It Yourself - skateboard community. The local skaters and homeless started to build concrete banks, spines, and fun boxes without permission in an abandoned hotel beneath the Burnside Bridge. Since everything was done illegally on private terrain, the local police tried multiple times to make them go away until 1994-5, the city of Portland sanctioned the Burnside project as an experiment in community policing, successfully creating a new social space-and not just for skaters. This opens up a new way in which skateboarders express themselves in the public realm, as one skater explained, using this model the "best skatepark a city could give to its skaters would be a piece of land with nothing on it" and let them design and produce it themselves (I. Borden, 2001, p.77). This DIY culture will be reproduced all over the world, mixing local communities from all social classes and even tourism.

These waves of popularity and the destruction of so many skateparks question whether it is reasonable to include old skateparks that are still visible nowadays in the heritage discourse. And indeed, In September 2014, the Rom Skatepark in Essex, England, was listed as a heritage site (I. Borden, 2014). The Florida based Skateboard Heritage Foundation is a non-profit organization that seeks to protect 'legacy' skateparks and preserve the cultural heritage of skateboarding. However, skateboarding in the '80s will drastically change and will move to the street. This will then ask questions of heritage about skateboarding sites, no more skateparks but actual social spaces produced by skateboarders. Spaces that some will then become sacred sites, with a lot of importance in the skate culture. **The** third boom in skateboarding popularity is brought by street skateboarding with the apparition of the "Ollie", a fundamental trick, that allows the skater to adapt to obstacles and to open the whole city for trick possibilities (figure 3).



Street skateboarding started as a new style of practicing skateboarding; it was not done on the curves anymore but simply on the ground using the street furniture. Street skateboarding comes mostly from freestyle skateboarding; indeed, it came as an adaptation of the multitude of tricks done on the ground to the urban furniture. The freestyle community, through a creative process of inventing new movements, ended up inventing the ollie that is at the base of street skateboarding. Rodney Mullen is considered the father of the ollie since he is the first one to perform it on the flat ground - the older version was performed onramps.

Figure 3: Picture of an Ollie other a rock by Yeelen Moen, Antiz Skateboarding.

Nevertheless, the adaptation to this practice on the architecture of the everyday city considerably changes skateboarding at its core. The EMB, Embarcadero, in San Francisco, and the Love Park in Philadelphia are examples of how skateboarders are now meeting in the principal square of the city and no more in hidden and rare parts of the city. Due to the lack of skateparks and the lost popularity of the old school skateboarding style, street skateboarding rapidly became the most urban and populist version of the sport. Everyone can afford street skateboarding: you need a skate and the city. In 1999 they were an estimated 9.5 million skateboarders in the U.S. alone (Levine July, 1999; p70). Street skateboarding started as a non-conform movement, with a motto like "Skate and destroy/Skate and create" they understand the degradation that skateboarding can make on the street furniture, but street skateboarders don't feel much trouble by it. The reason that they don't feel much reverence for these spaces is the fact that again, most of this space has practically no use. Even being at the center of cities, they are left abandoned and used only for pedestrians to pass. Skaters come to understand here that these spaces are scripted for use only by office workers, tourists, and conventioneers (O. Howell, 2001, p.4).

Thus, skateboarding through this new activity enunciates an important political and social critic of the city, and in these practices, Ian Borden recognizes that it does it through performing, a performative critique of the city. This critique can be resumed in three main points, the first one is that skateboarders don't need a purpose-built space, the whole city can be a pleasure ground. In that sense," pleasure rather than work, activity rather than passivity, performing rather than recording are potential components of the future, yet unknown city" (I. Borden, 2001, p.173).

Secondly, according to Ian Borden, skateboarders use their whole body to perform, and they do it in front of everyone, removing the anonymity of the public space. Using his whole body, the skateboarder critiques the "malification" of urban spaces and more importantly it says that we can be the person that we want to be in the city. Smelling, touching, listening, experiencing the architecture using our body is more and more difficult in the commercial city where public spaces are designed for the people to consume the city with the eye or maybe with the wallet. Cycling, running, or riding your skateboard makes you feel the city through your wheels or foot, up through your body. The functionalist city, segregate usage and thus, segregate the body in time and exclusive spaces, as Lefebvre stresses (Lefebvre, 1972). Skateboarders listen, touch, feel the urban architecture, they go against this segregation and reassert the human body.

Thirdly, when skating in the street, skateboarders have their own way to appreciate architecture. Urban furniture and everyday architecture have another purpose, they become object of desire, of skateboard desire. Their idea of architecture goes against the well-imposed idea that architecture should be thought of as a grand monument made by famous architects in recognizable places. When using this architecture, they activate it and revalue it without thinking about who the architect is behind or what the building should represent.

Skateboarders, unwittingly perhaps, change the way we see urban planning and design by happening in the urban realm, and so, they have been at the avant-garde of the indignation against the commodification of space. The right to the city as Lefebvre suggested is the right to access the city but also the right to become the person that you want to be, to be resilient. In Michel De Certeau's book 'the practice of everyday life', skateboarding could be one example of tactics, processes of adaptation that recreate the city going against strategies. In his word, it is not necessarily unjust for those without power to engage in subversive tactics, and tactics can become strategies, they can become resilient. Ocean Howell describes the difference between going to work in downtown San Francisco in the '80s as a white-male and going to work with a skateboard, perception of him changed radically. Public spaces are conditioned by the people using them, it is a site of conflict responsible for establishing the meaning of what the city and its citizens are. More and more it is now shaped by the workers or the consumers that must move quickly from one place to another, from work to home. In nowadays situations, it seems that skateboarding has made its way to approval,

not without obstacles though, and not everywhere. Skateboarding is now in the Olympics and its popularity has grown internationally by millions of practitioners, maybe even hundreds of millions. One of the major outcomes from this pop of popularity is the resurgence of skateparks that started in the 2000s. Councils and charities have realized that skateparks are a really good way to reach part of society. They understood that skateboarding is a great way, and cheap way to obtain a leisure activity and improve your physical and mental health. Those new spaces are very different from the old school ones, there is no free entrance, nearly all of them are open to the public. This latter fact was very important, as street skateboarding started because skateparks in the '80s had an entrance fee. Nowadays skateparks must be open to the city if they want to attract street skateboarders wish currently is the most popular practice of the sport. Another reason why they are different from the old school ones is that they are very diverse, and they go beyond the purpose-built space we have seen earlier.

So, what are those new spaces? Mostly they are purpose-built spaces open to the city that incorporate the city furniture (ledge, bench, rail, and stairs...), ramps, and old-schools pools. However, some skateparks do not look like skateparks and can not be called skateparks. The concept praised by many architects is to simulate the urban realm implicitly providing a place for skateboarders to happen. Often those spaces are not directly announced to be a skateable space, they only suggest the practice of skateboard. The examples of these types of spaces are still verv few and differ from one city to another. What is most relevant about those places is that they try to integrate skateboarding in the city itself, spaces that are inclusive and will allow skateboarding to happen but also allow the everyday usage of the space. Someone can sit and read his newspaper while a skateboarder will perform in front of him. This new skate urbanism has proven itself to work. public squares that allow skateboarding are welcome by the skateboard community and by the public. It follows the idea of participatory planning of our city, taking the skateboarder, the resident, as an expert creating creative spaces for them. This new type of urbanism involves a user-generator approach that goes against the functionalist city.

The Spaces of Skateboarding

	A	S		S	0		1- 10	0	SR.
	1950s+	1960s+	1970s+	1975+	1980s+	1990s+	2004+	2011+	2014+
	Streets/Sidewalks	Track Parks	Pools	Skate Parks	Ramps	DIY	Plazas	Stealthparks	Skatedots
Designer⇒	Architect	Architect	Architect	Architect	Architect+Skater	Skater	Architect+Skater	Architect+Skater	Architect+Skater
Funding⇒	Public	Public+Private	Private	Public+Private	Public+Private	Private	Public+Private	Public+Private	Public+Private
Space⇒	Found+Appropriated	Constructed	Found+Appropriated	Constructed	Constructed	Found+Appropriated	Constructed	Constructed+Given	Constructed+Given
Status⇒	Excluded	Included	Excluded	Included	Included	Excluded/Included	Included	Included	Included

Figure 4: The history of spaces for skateboarding by Brien Glenney, 2019. **Skateboarding** is highly documented through videos and photography since it started, those media are one of the major ways to share a found place, a "spot" good for the practice of skateboarding. With time and through history there is a motivation to preserve important locations that have become meaningful, especially with the memory brought by those archives. As seen before, few skateparks from before the '80s are still alive, as an answer to this, in 2013 the Skateboarding Heritage Foundation was created. Based in Florida, this volunteer association is dedicated to the preservation of skateboarding's heritage, creating museums, and teaching the value of skateboarding, they have preserved many skateparks from destruction. However, when the space in question is not a skatepark, the controversy arises since some skateboarding spaces are full of skateboarding history. No skater wants to live again what happened in the redesign of the John F. Kennedy Plaza, "Love Park". Or many more examples like the Justin Herman Plaza in San Francisco, Brooklyn Banks in New York City, Central TV in Birmingham, Old Market Square in Nottingham, they all have helped build the global skateboarding scene but unfortunately, all have been demolished or redeveloped.

The will to preserve this activity and thus the social space created in the square was not only because it was very meaningful for the history of skateboarding but mostly because it was bringing a place where the citizen - skateboarder and all other people - made an extraordinary expression of youthful energy and joy, tempering the activities of the homeless population, injecting skateboard industry capital into the square and the area and generating a hip image of the city. The question of legacy is thus redefined, the user and their body create the space and thus an important memory for the skateboarding culture. Important locations are now being preserved, in 2015, the undercroft bridge in London was saved for those reasons and many more very well describe by Stuart Maclure. The Big O in Melbourne was destroyed and then rebuilt for the un lasting civic will of the skateboarders. The place Louis Pradel or Hotel de Ville (HDV) in Lvon, was saved after a continuous skater will to remain in the space. Paul O' Connor, a sociologist researcher from Honk Kong, discusses how skateboarding is close to religion with its rituals. There are skate pilgrimage, skate tourism, skate clothes, skate community, important skate places, many different types of users, point of view, opinions. He stresses that skateboarding is not a subculture but a culture that is not easy to define as it is hybrid and means many different things for many different people. Rituals, holidays (Go skate day), spaces, all these are important for the skateboarding culture. In that sense he describes how the attachment on the skateboarding spaces is strong but not static, the physical space does not matter much since it can be easily reproduced. The attachment is on the community, on what has been produced, on the intangible, the culture.

In Barcelona, as in many other cities, "sacred places" or famous spots that skateboarders love and would like to keep are being negotiated. In response, driven by a community will, skateboarders organize themselves and fight for their right to the city.

Skateboarding has high interaction with architecture an interaction described as wild and subversive (Glenney and mull, 2018) that unlike a sport is not bound and controlled by it but is active and symmetrical. Street skateboarding that appeared in the '80s suggests a different way of living in cities and we will see in the following part why it is important that it continue to happen in the street.



Figure 5: HDV, Nowmagazine, 2019



Figure 6: New HDV, taking in consideration skateboarders, from Charlycade instagram page, 2021

STREET SKATEBOARDING MEANINGFUL FOR OUR CITIES?

"Spring 1981: Skating goes underground and back into the streets" (Dave Makely, letter, Action Now, vol.7 no. 11, June 1981, p. 10)

"Str*eet guys they don't want to skate skateparks!*" Jesus Frenandez

Street skateboarding has struck far beyond the simple act of going on the board. skating backvard pools, or doing freestyle on the ground. Seen as distress for landscape architects, planners, and building owners; surprisingly, we can even now see design workshops that teach a new hostile architecture to prevent its practice (O. Howell, 2001). This type of skateboarding is still very young - around 55 years now - and through this playing, as described by Jacques Caroux, it proposes to use the anonymity of the poured concrete and the grey pavement to its advantage by adapting to modernism rather than letting it alienate skateboarders. Already in 1978, Jacques Caroux saw the "skate Sauvage" as creative, social, a discharge that reanimates, re-enchant the city materials. He saw also that the normalized development of skateboarding as a sport puts away the incredible layer of spontaneity and adaptation to an always more hostile urban environment. Other urban practices such as free-running and parkour reinvent the city and have the same characteristic as skateboarding. This discharge of the body has a strict relation with the grey and dull materials of the city, it revives them and uses them as a canvas for its art.

Street skateboarding differs from graffiti, as it is not an act of vandalism "the noise, traces and damage caused by skateboarding have never been its motives but rather its simple consequences "(R. Zarka, 2010, p.138) and those damages made by skateboarders - damage that is ultimately just scuff marks and waxed surfaces barely discernible to the public - resulted in the criminalization and exclusion of skateboarders from the public space (Glenney and O'Connor 2019). They are spaces where skateboarding should not happen, as they are spaces where climbing is not advisable. But this hostility toward skateboarders shows a bigger problem in our contemporary societies.

One could argue, why do skateboarders persist in their use of public space even in the face of extensive regulation and the provision of skate parks? The answer is in the very nature itself of this practice, in its value and culture, skateboarding happening in the street is more valued by other skaters and comes with great satisfaction for the skateboarder. Skaters do not bother with the judgment imbued with this practice; they are just adapting to this artificial environment that is the city by the simple act of playing. This act of playing with the city, conquering the urban environment implicitly yet continuously critiques contemporary cities and by doing so, skateboarder reinvent the city, they become creators rather than users.

Street Skateboarding imbues new spatial perception and behaviors by playing with the functionalist city. In the work of Dani Abulhawa, the discussion of symbolic and expressive movement in Skateboarding makes a parallel between skateboarding and dance, skateboarding, and performance. Through the description of the main tricks and movements that skateboarders incorporate and never forget as riding a bike or a dancer performing the skater becomes a creative performer.

The push - involving the skater to go on the board and push with one foot using the floor and the other one on the bolts of the front truck - is the most basic movement used by any types of skateboarder whether the curious that use it for mobility, the street skateboarder, the downhill or the old school. Skateboarders Pisa Whitley and Alec Beck talk about the push as a form of symbolic movement. They describe the act of pushing, with its forward momentum and which is produced between the body, the board, and the ground as a literal and figurative embodiment of momentum and agency.



The ollie - a fundamental trick, that allowed street skateboarding to unfold - involves a sudden moment of force from the back foot exerted against the tail of the deck which forces the deck to the ground at that precise moment the skateboarder responds with an upward momentum of his body and levels out the board by leading the front foot sideways and guiding it towards the nose of the deck. When performing an ollie, the body is propelled with an extraordinary energy that requires a high degree of self-trust and the positioning of physical skill with a critical mindset to successfully perform.



The drop in - an entry point to transition skateboarding on-ramps and banks - involves the skateboarder placing the tail of the skateboard on the flat top of the ramp with his back wheels and front wheels extending over the ramp transition. At this point, the skateboarder's weight is in the back foot and on the tail keeping the skateboarder balanced at the top of the ramp. With the skateboarder's back foot on the tail, his front foot is placed other the bolts of the front truck which is hovering other the ramp and when ready the skateboarder transfer his weight to the front of his body and into his front foot which send the nose of the skateboard down towards the ramp transition. Once the skateboard wheels connect with the ramp surface the skateboarder can ride out of the ramp. The single act of drop-in is asking the skateboarder to give up the control of the weight and accumulated skill of his body. This skill was built by understanding the curvature of the transition, the weight transfer, and the total loss of control while being totally in trust with the deck. Here there is a disconnection made between the skateboarder's mind and his body, the body must respond, the mind must stop thinking and let go.



This commitment to the action is what makes this symbolic action so important and must be total so that the skater won't fall. This movement, once owned and well-performed will never be forgotten by the skater body. It is like riding a bike, where the cyclist understands that he has to stop thinking and let his body guide, once the skater knows how to let its body be guided by the skateboard and so drops in, it will never forget it.

Those actions are the basics, they will be performed, developed, and innovated repeatedly within a skateboard practice and across the whole individual skateboarding career. They are like basic dance moves that help us understand how the body operates inside those symbolic movements. This high degree of self-trust when pushing, performing an ollie, and dropping in is embodied by the skateboarder body through thousands of hours practicing and performing those movements. Those basic tricks are open to any innovation and those creative innovations happen thanks to the skateboard community and the context, the street. Thanks to the community and by practicing, the skateboarder will pick some tricks that he likes from others and will learn them by mimicking. After this act of mimicking he will give back to the community by the expression of himself in the street and thanks to his individuality, his style, "A person's energy... expelled on their board" - (John Cardiel, off-the-wall, 2012). Style comes with time, with total control over the skateboard, with a certain fluidity and fluency of movements. You can tell when someone just started practicing as you can tell when a person doesn't know the dance move.

When performing the skater must leave the cognitive part behind and play, he has to express the repertoire he has learned from the community and adapt it to the public realm. This is how skateboarding becomes innovative, a practice that needs the community to exist, not as individual as one could think. Skateboarding is made individually but it is embraced by a community. When skating, skateboarders teach each other this repertoire, this infinite content of movements, they also copy themselves and each skater will appropriate this movement to make it his own and then contribute back to the community in a way that defines the community itself. The greater the contribution, the more they express and form their individuality. We can talk about a creative community that seeks a sense of belonging.

As professional skateboarder Rodney Mullen puts it (2015), the context shapes the content. The street shapes the symbolic movements, the repertoire of skateboarders. When a skater interacts with the built environment, he imagines different possibilities regarding his abilities and his repertoire of movements, a repertoire mostly granted from the skateboard community. So creative self-expression in skateboarding is highly implicated in community involvement. Skateboarding is a socially engaged form of practice and encourages self-expression. In that sense, those symbolic features and this concept of creative communities is shared with dance and performance. Scholars of dance and performance studies have since a long time recognized the importance of creativity and expression practices. Performing and creating is a basic need to express ourselves and be who we are to help, to teach, deal with the sacred, persuade or convince, and many more. We are not robots; our lives are not agreeable when they are diminished to food rest and work. Skating is one way that individuals can fulfill a portion of these requirements for innovative real development for social connection, for imaginative self-expression.

In recent decades the street is becoming progressively more privatized and commercial. As seen by the performative critique made by skateboarding, the city prefers people that work, consume with the eve, or better, with the wallet (Borden, 2001). Public space should be the physical embodiment of democracy and it should facilitate the interaction between human beings and not just consumers. Public space, since the Greek Agora, is essential in the cities. The urban spaces are shared, they are the living part of the city that creates part of its culture through protest, political discussions, parties, markets. Many researchers have pointed out that public spaces are not really for everyone. In some cities being a woman, being queer, being a person of color, having a disability amongst other things can be extremely risky. The ability to be in a public space is conditioned by whether I should go to work, at home, or consume, Although policies and planning are slowly changing and the idea of inclusive public spaces that welcome gathering, assembling, meetings is appearing. Those public spaces are still very few and the presence of hostile and exclusionary architecture is still a norm when it comes to preventing a non-productive practice that brings damages like skateboarding or a bad image to the city i.e. homeless.

Nevertheless, Dani Abulhawa stresses through a performance made by herself how it is easy to be radical in public spaces "Even the slightest divergence from what is considered ordinary behavior is met with looks, comments, and physical interaction that at best come from curiosity or concern and at worst is made to control, prevents or exert authority or power." These responses are very diverse, sometimes it is for security reasons, maybe he will hurt himself, sometimes it is a gender-based action. Most of the time it is made to secure the smooth flow of capital. We regulate ourselves in public space, through look, judgment, and physical interactions. Any skateboarder has experienced an altercation with a member of the public, sometimes the innocent is not the skater but many times the public acts as regulators for the "good behavior in public" (D. Abulhawa, 2020).

As street skateboarding needs to happen in the public spaces of our city to exist, it should be embraced rather than persecuted. This adaptation made by skateboarders of the urban realm by the simple act of playing is a continuous and infinite performance, a dance that the public could enjoy watching every day. Many misconceptions are felt around skateboarders, they are often compared as "noise-makers, graffiti writers, juvenile delinquents, or simply "hoodlums". (C. Chiu, p.36). As skateboarding was mostly put away from the urban realm by the design of exclusive space or skate stoppers, this perception is understandable since they thought of themselves as urban guerrillas with mottos like "skate and destroy". But skateboarding schools, and some new approach to accepting skate in the public led to a practice that is inspiring, a different way of living in the city.

Skateboarding was mostly a masculine practice and is now completely redefined; it has been redefined especially because girls skate now. Public spaces are something we should fight for if we want to live in a liveable city. A city needs to be diverse. People need to see a diversity of life and behaviors and activities and interactions to develop. Skateboarders are site-specific performers; they repurposed zero-degree architecture by playing with it, creating a place for performance to happen. Those lines – sequences of tricks – made thanks to the symbolic movement that skateboarders use to have their style are inspiring. Those movements should not be sequestered and privatized by exclusive spaces; they should contribute to the social fabric of the city street. **Every** skater when coming to a new city will search for the closest skatepark or spot from the place they stay, and each city has a dedicated 'spot map'. Those maps are continuously recreated and open for changes, they are cognitive maps that draw a different city, a city lived by the skateboarder. How to not draw parallels between skateboarding and the situationist dérive. The playful and inventive manners of exploring an urban environment, looking for emotions and awareness describe by Guy Debord in 1955 as 'psychogeography' equals seemingly the exploration of cities in search of skateboarding space (Julien Revelard). The dérive according to Debord, is a passionate way of inhabiting space, a movement giving a recommended way of using conceived space. The Skateboard Dérive as explain by Hunter H. Fine (2013, p.9) is a "tap into a primal yet highly evolved desire to win back elemental considerations of space". Semi-private space and public space are thus being reconsider by the use of skateboarders.

"Underneath the concrete, indeed, for the contemporary sidewalk surfer lays the beach" (Hunter H. Fine,2013, p.9).

As seen before, skaters sometimes become residents and create indeed a routine of going to established places (plaques tournantes). However, with an appetite for shapes and an urge to make artistic videos skaters do go on for quests to find favorable terrain. This is particularly happening during the pandemic; as indoor and some outdoor skatepark are close all other the world, skateboarder went back in going to the street to find places to practice. During the quarantine, In France, only individual activities were permitted, Victor Cascarignany, a prolific skateboarder, went on journeys alone around his hometown – Toulouse – to take videos of himself doing tricks on casual urban objects. With creativity, he again pushes the city border finding new spots, new terrain for the Toulouse skate map. This going back to the street, created a general apathetic feeling toward skateparks, as street skateboarding is a challenging and creative way to make something other than competing and be the best skateboarder.

Unlike situationists, skateboard though doesn't claim any subversive aspect of their practice, but they build a different urban culture that goes outside the functionalist city.

As Colin Ward expresses in the Child in the City, this will to explore and play is driven by a need to research space between the house and the school. A space that is contested and infinitely repurposed especially with the practice of skateboarding. Skaters are not only children; they are big children that take on their time to have leisure. Colin Ward sees the child activities in the street as a basic need of performing and being, expressing through the body and Skaters are not only children; they are big children that take on their time to have leisure.

Coming from the countryside — where I started to skate — to the city, the public space becomes progressively more controlled and driven by the 'ad-equate' user. The mallification of urban space as expressed by Ian Borden is felt more, the body finds itself pressured and anonymous. Everything is decided from above, the streets, the squares, the parks, all are driven by a land-use plan and policies. The cars also seem to be kings and we, without knowing, adapted to its everyday noise and pollution and accepted it in our cities. When moving across the city, the skateboarder will see the left other of urbanism as a space for opportunities and will enter in conflict with its primary function. This conflict is systematically reproduced with a city that rejects the dreams and imaginations of those growing up in them.

I present on the next page a map of Barcelona through the lens of a skateboarder. Looking at Barcelona through those lenses, we see an abstraction of the city, an abstraction that alters the experience of everyday life, and looks at zero-degree architecture as space for possibilities. An exploration of the everyday concretized skateboard spaces in Barcelona. Materials are repurposed and a spatial dialog is created by this placeless practice. This diagram, mixed with photo drawing and text, expresses an activity that turns an urban conception into a political consideration. A tactical consumption of the city. The proper use of the common element of the city is destroyed and unanticipated wear and tear are produced, leaving transition marks. Skateboarding here denies the rationality of the street. They fly from one point to another, horizontally using the pavement but also vertically jumping obstacles. The "rat with wing" vision as express by Mitch Miller (2020), and the street rat – street skateboarders often call themselves "street rats" - are pictured here oscillating between the pavement, the furniture, and the square of Barcelona.



CHAPTER TWO: BARCELONA, A SKATEPLAZA FOR STREET SKATEBOOARDING

"It is as they make it on purpose, Barcelona look like a skatepark" Davi Dias

"Barcelona is a nice city, but if I was not a skater I would probably not have been to Barcelona" Calvin James

Barcelona is a reference when it comes to street skateboarding, its granite, smooth pavement, and modernist urban design made it the most famous destination for street skateboarding in the world. The whole city is filled with skateboard history with signs of shredding/sliding/grinding almost accounting for a mark of authenticity for Barcelona's urban furniture. Living in Barcelona makes you a witness of street skateboarding, you see practitioners everywhere and in some public places, the most famous ones, skateboarding is happening continuously making it something banal for the eyes of the everyday citizen. The production of photography and skateboard videos is partly guilty of this fame. The city is very well known by the skateboarders thanks to those videos and they even represent documents for the history of some part of the city itself. A video game called "*Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2*" includes sites of Barcelona in 2000 creating a reverie of Barcelona as a skate city. This unprecedented popularity is due to numerous factors, among them, the city urban scape evolution plays an important role.

The post-industrial era started in Barcelona with the transition to a democratic state at the beginning of the '80s. Like many cities around the world, the industry of Barcelona started to move away from the city which led the municipality to act and restart the economy. The municipality amplified the service sector, increased the competition between cities, and advantageous position in the network economy (translated from Spanish - Xavier Camino,p .210).

After 40 years of the Francoist regime, a change needed to be done. The grey and dull urban landscape did not attract any tourists at that time (Roger Sunyer, 2016). The public space was crucial for this new politic and it started at the beginning of the '80s with an acupuncture plan of the city with some small civil size projects. This anti-Franquist feeling led urbanists, architects, sociologists, and the social demand manifested in neighborhood organizations to undertake and shape the urban landscape (Jordi Borja, 2010). The easiest and fastest way was to act on the

public space and, between 1980 and 1986, the city did around 150 interventions in the public space (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1993) and fifty-five new plazas (La Vanguardia, 1983). Oriol Bohigas oversaw the urban planning, and his team and himself made those changes with the idea of the "compact city" thinking more about the form and the sense and less about the function. The realization of "squares, streets, walks, parks, rambles, intersections, pedestrian crossing, urban furnishings, signals, monuments' as well as removing cars and demolishing blocks drove the answer to the dereliction and congestion that some central neighbourhoods were experiencing at the time (Vivian Narotztky, 2007).

Little was thought about the protection and appreciation of the historic heritage, many modernist buildings were destroyed for the sake of a "*sentido comun*" (Common sense), that praised for a drastic change. Urban furnitures were then standardized to contribute to the uniformization of the architecture thus giving a sentiment of Catalan nationalism and character to the city of Barcelona. (V. Narotztky, 2000). Those new urban furnitures and pavements design were very much important to manage and improve the quality of life of the citizens but at the same time, they are one of the main reasons why the skateboarders dream of Barcelona as a skate plaza. Design was everywhere and architects at the time were free to pave the city at their will using this new detail catalog, green was mostly not used resulting in very low maintenance of the public spaces benefiting the municipality.

The second phase characterized by city-scale projects of urbanization was driven by the entrance of Spain in the European Union and by the hosting in Barcelona, of the Olympic games in 1992. This period of renewal, which expanded from 1986 to 1992, would transform the whole city with new infrastructure, communication lines, and neighborhoods. It would create new "areas de nova centralitad" (areas of new centrality) to prevent the historical center from pulling everyone. Those changes were not without complaints from the public, they felt ignored because of a minimum or even nonexistent participation. The transformation continued in 1986 with a campaign called Barcelona "posa't guapa", (Barcelona `get pretty'). (R. Sunyer, 2016). The objective was similar to the first acupuncture plan, new centralities, a compact city, and creative public spaces. This campaign was such a success that it continued for 30 years. the city's public space was thus thought from a bourgeois perspective, to contemplate and walk (V. Narotztky, 2007). At the same time, big-scale urban transformation continued as well and some were oriented by private interest. Francesc Munoz talked about the new Parc del forum built-in 2004 as "The definitive abandonment of the historicist model to embrace the typical ras-logo architectures of the globally successful, visible and cloneable resorts of the Florida coast a Moscow (Francesc Munoz, 2008; p.162). With the year passing, Barcelona became an "object of desire" (V. Narotztky, p. 234) for the tourist and succeeded in pointing the city on the international map as an important European city.

A very relevant result of this will to escape from the left other of the fascist and industrial era was the creation of the "plaza dura". (Hard square) (Figure 7), Those hard squares appeared around 1983 for the first time and were highly criticized by the public for its uninviting grev feel with no green and almost no furniture. The citizens felt abused by it since it represented for them an impossibility to use, apart from crossing it. Although, architects claimed it differently, in his book "Diferencias, Topografía de la Arauitectura Contemporánea" (Differences, Topographies of Contemporary Architecture), Ignasi de Solà-Morales conceptualize the plaza dura as a place of flows, dynamics, set of events, and a meeting point of energies. This model was going against the old tradition of separating the spaces and dictating each function, thus imposing consumption on the citizen. it was thought of as a terrain vague - semi-abandoned spaces with no functional definition - where the true essence of the urban can provide anonymous freedom (Izaskun Chinchilla, 2020), The paradox here is that this avant-garde concept was mostly beneficial for the skateboarders. A place free from functions that opens itself for appropriation is a perfect place for skateboarding to unfold and show itself to the public. And this idea of flows, dynamics, meeting points of energies, and anonymous freedom goes precisely with what street skateboarding is: a playing and creative adaptation to the anonymity of the urban environment. This type of "plaza dura" gave the beat and became normalized as many squares in Barcelona, in Spain, and internationally will look the same.



Figure 7: Plaza dels països Catalans or Plaza de Sants, urban-networks, 2012.

PARADISE UNTIL PROHIBITION

Skateboarding in Barcelona started like many other European cities in the '70s with the creation of Spanish companies and teams of skaters dedicated to advertising the practice by organizing competitions and events. This spirit for a surfer attitude was highly influenced by their neighbor, France, and more generally Europe and the US. Due to the lack of skateparks, the main style at the beginning, as in the US back in the '60s, was freestyle skateboarding. Vertical skateboarding appeared later in 1979 with the construction of 2 skateparks in Arenys de Munt, Catalonia, and in Madrid. The skatepark in Catalonia had a short life - 6 years - due to a lack of use, link to a drop in popularity in the skate scene.

The second wave of skateboarding was driven by the discovery of the city and the new street skateboarding scene that was emerging in public squares in the US like Love park or EMB - Embarcadero, Soon, this practice emerged in every modern square of cities around the world. The Placa dels Països Catalans or SANTS. started to be one of the first meeting points of every skater in the city. Built in 1983 it was the first public square in Barcelona from a long list to be skated. It offered a smooth pavement, empty space, and interesting furniture, an exception at that time (X. Camino, 2010). The Gaudi street soon followed to be another meeting point for the same reason, smooth pavement, little slope, and very minimal granite banks. Skateboarders were exploring and copying what they could to practice. They were highly influenced by magazines and videos from the US that showed the skater groups, brands, skate spaces, tricks, shops - it gave them the push to produce that at home and for some, to go there and maybe get famous. The city was affected by major urbanization at that time and the skaters, as urban explorers, were scrutinizing every little piece of granite of this new design. Soon, they started to be interpreted by public opinion as a direct attack on the civic rules of behavior and public space. As we saw before, citizens are the first to regulate themselves when it comes to public spaces. Skateboarders were mostly male teenagers, from very different social backgrounds, poor, rich, bourgeois, workers, everyone is united by this practice.

Hopefully, and because of a need to remove those skateboarders from the streets, the municipality started to build skateparks. The first one was the skatepark de Glòries, soon followed thanks to the funds generated by the Olympics by the construction between 1990 and 1992 of the Turo Parc, the skatepark de la Mar Bella, de la Via Favència - La Guineueta, La Dunas de la Rambla Prim and diverse metallic ramps in different parts of the city (Translated from Spanish, X. Camino , p. 153).

Most of them were built privately, without the participation of the skaters, apart from one, prized by the skateboarders, the Turo park. This resulted in a skatebark loved and intensively used by the skateboarder. The skatepark wasn't very well built, but since skateboarders helped in the design, it had more value for the community. Unlike other ones like the one in via Favencia, those constructions started soon to be abandoned. Those skateparks were designed to host vertical, or ramp skateboarding, a style that was not possible to practice in the street or anywhere since unlike in the US, pools in Europe are not round and pipes and ditches are not in the same scale to be able to be skated. Those skateparks favor a big go back to the old school skateboarding that was happening in the US during the '70s and '80s. They also help to promote the practice as a sport, and thus, help to change the public vision toward it. Yet, street style skateboarding kept on growing, and was the most popular style of the time: It was too late to reduce the number of skaters in the streets of Barcelona. To argue this point, the example of Turo park is particularly interesting. The Turo park, before the construction of the skatepark, was already used by street skateboarders since they discovered there some very fine white marble ledges. In response to this non-civic use, The Turo skatepark was built, so skateboarders will stop skating those ledges. But as animals in the process of adapting to their surrounding environments, those street skateboarders started to skate the entrance of the Turo skatepark that contains ledges as well, and, without knowing, they completely refuted the actions of the municipality. This double-edged response from the municipality - creating a new formal vertical landscape for skateboarding in the hope that street skateboarding will disappear thus helping its popularization and increase its practitioners - is a common practice everywhere around the world and continues today.

The Turo skatepark kept on generating skaters, especially when skateboarding was at its apogee at the beginning of the 2000s. It resulted in many complaints from the direct neighbors because of the insecurity sensation and the noise. In 2003, skateboarders were evicted with the destruction of the skatepark and the construction of a kiosk - bar. Those complaints from the public are a common problem that skateboarders face when dealing with the city, it resulted in many evictions and even fights with the objector. After the 1992 Olympic games, an economic crisis affected Spain and internationally, a big general recession in the practice of skateboarding led many skateparks in Barcelona to be abandoned. As Pol Martin puts it:

"Lucky for them skate kind of died in 1993-4, in the 80's and early 90's skate was very popular, every kid skated, all my friends had Santa Cruz board, Powell Peralta all this old brand but suddenly it was other, none of my friends were skating. The ones continuing were like the weirdos... If you wanted to skate you had to go to SANTS, some gang was still skating in Turo park, and some in la Guineueta as well."Pol Martin In the second half of the '90s, skateboard popularity came back in Barcelona thanks to a new board design better suited for the practice of street skateboarding and new magazines like Dogway from Bilbao. Barcelona was getting pretty, the streets were redesigned, new granite furniture and 'plaza dura' everywhere, soon it became clear that Barcelona was the place to enjoy street style at its fullest. In 1998, Barcelona and its local skateboarder were featured in a Transworld magazine in the US which blew-up Barcelona as an incredible city to skate, with many spots, amazing local skaters, sun, and almost no prohibition. In the year 2000 many skateboarders from all other Spain started to visit Barcelona, some even stayed, and later in 2002 it was the turn of skaters from the US. Pol recall:

"Summer 2002 was the summer that changed everything, many US brands and professionals came. Some spent the whole summer and came back the year after, some stayed."Pol Martin

This interest was also largely influenced by the high prohibition skaters were facing in the US and some northern European cities. Skaters from everywhere came and started to live in the center of Barcelona, they were meeting in the most famous square to practice. Squares like SANTS - as seen earlier in the chapter- the Jardins de les Trex Xemeneies, la placa Universitat, and Macba - Plaza dels angels, were skated every day by people from all other the world. (X. Camino, 2010, p. 163). Commerce grew in consideration, shops started to open, tourist companies started to offer skate travel, local footwear shops and food shops grew. Many people started to invest in skateboarding in Barcelona, this phenomenon was impressive and skaters kept on coming. For skaters, the beach, the Ramblas, the art nouveau architecture, and the beautiful gothic neighborhood, praised by the tourists were not their concerns. They wanted to skate the city and its famous spots while maybe discovering new ones at the same time. The cognitive skate map grew importantly in the 90s-2000s, and the city became overflow with skaters. At first, the practice did not seem that problematic, since Barcelona praised for more use of the public space and especially sport was a good argument for a healthy city. The problems arrived from the bottom; this intense use led to the break of the coexistence in certain spaces of the city. The noise, degradation, and the insecurity felt by the neighbors were all arguments that generated a negative public opinion around skateboarding. Together with the mass tourism that Barcelona faced that period - that created different use and user of the public space - the negative impact of skateboarding was added to new activities such as prostitution, night drinking, and ambulant or top blanket. This negative public opinion and the many complaints led to the creation of the "*ley del civismo*" or civic law in 2005:

"Article 31. (...) Will remain prohibited the use of stairs for pedestrians, elements for the accessibility of disabled people, railings, benches, handrails, or any other element of urban furniture, for acrobatics with skates and skateboards". (translated from Spanish, Ajuntament of Barcelona, 2005). The police started to apply the law, sometimes closing the eyes, with very severe fines that could go up to 1500 euro. By 2009, in three years, the law enforcement imposed more than 700 sanctions (Anna Flotats, El pais, December 6, 2009). Skateboarders were thus forbidden to skate in the street and in a broader view, this practice was then seen as a pathology for the wellbeing of the city. Like pigeon spike or anti-homeless device, the implementation of hostile architectures for skateboarders made its apparition also at that time with the so-called skate stopper - little pieces of metal place on a urban furniture (mostly rails, curbs, or bench) to prevent skater from grinding/sliding. Hopefully, this was not used intensively, only in a few cases this architecture appeared in the urban landscape. In the meanwhile, at a higher level, the municipality didn't stop seeing skateboarding as an asset. Many events were organized in the city and the international brands incoming were welcomed with open arms. This leads to the next part, where the contemporary discourse of skateboarding in Barcelona will be discussed.

From the year 2000 till 2011, The response of the municipality towards skateboarding was mainly repressive, without the construction of skateparks mainly due to lack of funds. Skateboarding was added to the many unfavorable urban activities that were developing around tourism. Every year more tourists come to Barcelona and each central district of Barcelona is now fighting for a going back to the normal "*life of barrio*" (neighborhood life) this is due to an increasingly present tourism policy. For Barcelona skaters, this meant to rediscover the city in search of more space. The famous skateboarding spaces of the city were often filled with skaters from everywhere, making it hard to create any sort of community. At the same time, skating the transition came back, even stronger than before. They were mostly kids when they started and now they grew up and they can now fight for their right to the city. The case of La Guineueta is very relevant, out of the 4 skateparks built in the 80's - Mar Bella, Turo park, el bowl de les Glories, and La Guineueta - only this one survived.

Skaters in this area started to modify the spot, as in SANTS, skaters were building themselves some obstacle or transition helping them to create their space of spatial desire. As a result, they built one of the most emblematic skate curves in the world - the Hell curving (Hell curving - un giro de esperanza). This curve featured the typical pool tile coping, which increased its value as a symbol of skateboarding. La Guineueta in 2000 was an image of resistance for the skateboard community, they maintained the skatepark themselves and generated an equal and social public space for the neighbors. They created an association and protected the place from destruction. After some time - in 2018 - the municipality started to understand how much this place was important for the community and accepted to help. The municipality had also in mind that the construction and renovation of skateparks like this could be a good strategy to push its ban on street skateboarding and at the same time, revitalizing some lost space in the city.

To remove skaters from the "Plaza dels angels" - an icon of skateboarding space in Barcelona and the world - the municipality thought of different tactics: Implementing defensive architecture and building skateparks in the limit of the old city. In the end, this did not occur, thanks to a lack of funds, but it does show how the municipality dealt with and thought of street skateboarding in 2010. (X. Camino, p. 191). In parallel, with the will to increase cities' inter-competitiveness, and to create a new status to fight upon: 'skateboard capital', Barcelona was proud to host in 2013 the X-Games - one of the biggest extreme sports events, and the most popular for skateboarding at that time. They also built a permanent structure in Badalona, the skate agora that will host the SLS - street league skateboarding - annually. This increased the view of Barcelona as a skate freestyle friendly city thus, appealing to the "creative class" (Florida). The economic benefits in hosting such events are immense, skaters were still seen as a problem but at the same time, the munic-ipality understood the benefit of framing them as a sport. The SLS is entirely a competition about street skateboarding, and the skate agora is a typical example of a large skate plaza exclusively designed for skateboarding. This plaza features typical urban furniture from the city exaggerated to create a skateboard environment, built by a prestigious American company, this model succeeded in creating a perfect frame to produce street skateboarding competition.

Following this, and having in mind that skateboarding can be a very social and healthy activity - as seen earlier with La Guineueta - the municipality decided to build and restore five 'landscape parks' in five different neighborhoods of the city. Those 'landscape parks' were designed by the same architectural office - SCOB - with a will to push the definition of what a skatepark is. They designed the old Marbella and La Guineueta skateparks and design three new Landskate parks in Les Corts, El Prat de Llobregat, and Baró de Viver. They attempted to create an 'alternative public space' (agoras Urbanas). As they say, "these skateparks are not a game or a sports area; they are not a street, a square or a park either; they are all these things at the same time". The effort produced a space far away from the "skateparks in the past which were turning their back to their surrounding, forgetting their relation with the city" and succeeded in providing integrated spaces in the urban landscape giving continuity to the democratization of public space that Barcelona began in the 80s"(SCOB).

Another promising action towards the integration of skateboarding was the case of PARAL-LEL, a legendary square situated in the Jardin Les Tres Xemeneies, skated by street skateboarders till the '90s. This spot was very appealing for skateboarders and was featured in many street videos all over the world. It was a very famous place that had to be renovated in 2015. The main reasons for its renovation were the noises made by skateboarders and problems with the passing pedestrians but it was mainly because the place was not well frequented due to high drug usage and homelessness. Although the regeneration project didn't work because the area is still frequented by the same previous people, the only thing that changed is that they moved the skaters 20 meters away and built them a skatepark. This renovation was perceived as a catastrophe for the skateboard community, it reached so far in the imagination that many new spaces for skateboarding include this typical 29cm high platform that PARAL-LEL was famous for Pol Martin, the designer of SkateArchitect explained how it is even impossible to perfectly replicate those platforms, they were not perfectly flat, a little imperfect slope was giving a slight help when performing manuals. Hopefully, the new

skatepark design greatly took into consideration the skaters, and against all odds, the new space was almost identical to the famous and now lost one. Complex stories of civic involvement, like the PARAL-LEL case, in the design of the skatepark by SCOB suggest that those new spaces for skateboarding are not thought to be a legitimate reason to ban street skateboarding.

Out of the five projects for skateboarding, one was greatly designed with the help of the skateboard community - La Guineueta. In the documentary 'Landskating', the design of La Guineueta was a result of a citizen participatory process, deriving from a clear and persistent civic will. This user-generated space was a clear bottom-up approach where SCOB architects acted to level the voice of the citizens. As seen before, the skatepark was already supported by the locals' skater, that even created a youth association to put formally what they were doing (SCOB, 2015).

Although those interventions challenge the notion of skatepark they still provide a terrain made of concrete to practice exclusively activities on wheels. Overall, those terrains are very much appreciated by transition skaters, but street skateboarders are in general not convinced. This is mainly true for the many street skate plaza designs, the participation of other skaters in the design was non-existent which led to a design not very appreciated by street skateboarders. The main reason is that the size of the rails, curbs, and their materiality are very different from the one that you can find in the city.

In the end, even though they are not perfect, they are places where skating can happen without problems and as any skaters will say more skateparks means "More stuff to skate. More skaters. More skate-events. More understanding of skateboarding. More social platforms for young people." (Gustav Svanborg Edén).

Another project that resulted from a participatory process was the Born skate plaza. Constructed in 2019, the idea was to design a perfect place to practice street skateboarding while completely blending it with the city. Space has the same materials and furniture as the city and follows the grid produced by the building in front making it an urban open space for the city and at the same time for the building itself - a very traditional idea of creating plazas. This space is considered a success by the street skateboarding community, all the skaters skating there are very happy - at the end, this is only what they wanted - good floor, good curbs and not too far from home.

In the meanwhile, skaters from the informal skateable places are now negotiating with ardor their right to be there. While many follow the motto "shut up and skate", many more are more into "skate and fight" and want to be recognized by the city. While it could be argued that Barcelona was overtaken by this mass of skateboarders, its profitable architecture was the one producing it. Skaters came to Barcelona because they saw the perfect city to do street skateboarding - not because they wanted to steal the public space, make noise and destroy public furniture. The municipality understood how valuable skateboarding can be in the refurbishment process of the city, as "shock troops of gentrification". The next step would be to understand how much skateboarding is important in the street, as a shock troop of "magnificent life" and they should be thought of as "appropriate" users rather than being excluded. Apart from the born skate plaza - a drop in the ocean - most recent projects still resemble the definition of skateparks - at best-dedicated spaces. And with the coming of the Olympics, the "skatepark mania "is expected to expand (Julien Revelard, p.81). The culture and future generation of skaters could be very much affected by the pre-eminence of one terrain as recognized by Dobijanootens (2018):

"The closer skateboarding comes to resemble a sport, the more outsiders will treat it as one, arguing that like other sports it should only be practiced in its designated zones" (i.e. skateparks).

In Barcelona, from a planning perspective, skateboarding is considered a sport, projects like the Born skate plaza, PARAL-LEL, and La Guineueta are a starting point in considering the voice of citizens when making decisions for skateboarding in the city. Skateboarding in the world is also fundamentally changing, LGBTQ+ skateboarders are beginning to appear but also disabled skateboarders, a diverse range of population is entering the practice. This diverse range of user needs could be represented in the public space as well.

Barcelona has shown a guite ambiguous role concerning skateboarding, allowing it in the urbanism but mostly in an exclusive way or allowing them in what we can call "space of exception" like MACBA (Marte Punyed Francisco, 2019). This will to control the public space is linked to having a "beautiful city" that will pave the way for tourism and investment. This shows how the public space turns to be commodified and host capitalism. Skateboarders are often seen as antisocial making noise and disturbing the public realm, how can they be civic? Case studies help to understand how to integrate them into the city and how skateboarders organise themselves to keep the space, not the physical charecteristic but the social space. In the case of Macba (Plaza dels angels), the answer is difficult because it is a particular place in a particular neighborhood, it is a place of conflict. And this is where skateboarding is important, it creates conflict, a fight for space, David Knight stresses out that in a world made of clean public space made for the white male consumer, clean of conflict is sedative and that a real public space needs users to fight for it (Pushing Boarders, 2018). By continuing to respond to the market, the city becomes more inhuman, the skating activity comes as a great way of using free time, helping us think innovatively, being a vanguard of imagining the city differently, and being inclusive as gender-equal.



The following part discusses the process of appropriations made by skaters off several urban spaces in Barcelona. Barcelona is a very relevant reference because it hosts all the forms of appropriations made by skaters, from the little object created by the skater to the daily appropriation of one of the main squares of the city. Each space and process are different from one another, but we can extract some similarities. This will help us understand why problems occur in certain cases and why not in others. but more than that it will help us understand what the best practice-based design could be when dealing with skaters and understand what the effect of skateboarding in the social urban environment of Barcelona is.

DO IT YOURSELF CULTURE

The DIY culture is strongly inherent in the skateboarding culture, when I was a kind I had to build my skate spot because I had nothing to practice on. The main idea is to reproduce what is in the city - bench, rails, pool - or even build something completely new that can be only skated. This practice is one of the best suited for skaters because it allows them to be fully creative while producing the best-fitted space for them. Any skater will tell how joyful he/she feels about skating the ramps he/she designed. This solution is chosen because spaces for skateboarding are not always accessible, a road is a good start, but it is very limited. Do it yourself - DIY - skateboarders are also seen as counter-cultural, where hedonism is at the first position and a strong sense of community and appurtenance to the space they occupy. They are skaters that resist the certification of skateboarding (Thomas Riffaud, 2019) in the sense that the competition doesn't matter, what matters is the community. They are also mainly the ones that signed the petition against Skateboard in the Olympics, a will to "keep it real" or keep it counter-cultural.

DIY can happen anywhere at any time, any "types" of skater will be related to them because any space of skateboarding is good to skate. Here is a general manner, it could be argued that DIY enthusiasts are against the purpose-built form made by the council. Theirs crave for freedom makes them escape the spatial control of the city and forced design. They are the builders of their spot of spatial desire (Vivoni), an effective technique to fully appropriate a space giving it more identity and character. A new, unplanned, genius loci is thus emerging and this tactical urbanism is often felt to be the only way in obtaining cause when dealing with the municipalities. This practice is intensively present in Barcelona, from the first public square to be skated and transformed to three big and famous communities legitimately implemented in the urban landscape of the city.

PLAÇA DELS PAÏSOS CATALANS

Plaça dels Països Catalans (from Catalan, square of the catalan lands) is located between Estació de Sants (Sants train station) and Calle Numància, within the Eixample district. The space transformation was the result of a social movement pushed by the general democratic transition that Spain was engaging within the '70s. Citizens in the neighborhood of SANTS took the opportunity of the new 1976 General Metropolitan Plan that reserved this space for public use and claimed a public space. Without any competition, the Municipality of Barcelona asked the architects Helió Piñón and Albert Viaplanato with the help of Enric Miralles to redesign the square. The outcome was a continuous hard surface of two hectares without any green area and includes two roofs. One in the center, taller in height, transparent, and very slender, does not provide shelter. The other one, in the continuity of the train station entrance, undulate and provide shelter and shadow. It creates a linear path and includes a dozen of urban furniture made of granite. The square itself is like an island or a roundabout in the middle of cars, its access means to cross the road which makes it not very comfortable for the citizens. () Helio Pinon and Albert Viaplanato were two professors at the Barcelona Faculty of Architecture and had very modernist and radical ideas for the city. The budget was limited and the idea of "terrain vaque" suited this context.

Internationally the square was praised and even helped in making the Catalan capital famous on the international map, It received the FAD award -Fostering Art and Design - in 1984 and 1994, the special mention at Harvard University when the city received the Prince of Wales Prize for Urban Design (V. Narotzky, 2007). The model became a reference and architect Oriol Bohigas at that time part of the Urban Planning Delegation incorporated it in the so-called Barcelona Model and implemented it in many parts of the city. This idea of "terrain vague" opened for appropriation, flows, freedom as a virgin canvas for a painter was not appreciated by the community. The Plaça dels Paisos Catalan especially because of its context - surrounded by cars - was soon left abandoned, only used as a passage to go to the train station. This virgin canvas was very favorable for the skater community that with time drew three generations of skateboarders and became one of their most important places for skateboarding.

The 'SANTS' plaza as skateboarder call it, is perfect for skateboarders, it is located centrally and at the same is completely isolated, it is flat and empty but has some little stairs slopes and urban furniture allowing an infinity of movements and tricks, it has a very smooth concrete ground to ride and It is used only as a passage so skateboarder can skate without bothering pedestrians. The appropriation was done very rapidly and became famous in the world of street skateboarding. Because it was quite isolated, the police never put them away even with the 2006 civic law. It is also after this law that the square was intensively used since it offered the street skateboarder a free island to skate without fearing having to pay a fine.



The square was left for the skateboarders and they started to transform physically the space, emphasizing this appropriation. They also started to show it by leaving broken boards and shoes signifying that "they were there" (X Camino, 2010) a normal behavior in the skateboard community. The Police contiuniously removed elements from the square, and with time passing the square lost most of its magic when it was first appropriated by the skater is the 80's. As a response and also as pure desire, skater started to build themsleves some object in order to reproduce the old square and furniture.

This appropriation and modification of usage of this already abandoned and not popular place was another argument by the neighborhoods to show their disapproval of such places. By the time passing and with the intensive usage of skateboarders the ground is not what it used to be, and urban furniture is mostly in need of refurbishment. Because of its status as FAD project, the square has a certain value in terms of architectural heritage, the police are often asked to remove skateboard obstacles leaving the square its appearance. For 30 years, skaters made it a secure place of social exchange and urban life. Abandoned by most of the neighbors, the skaters developed their practice and created their 'spot of spatial desire'(Vivaldi). A practice that helps many young to affirm themselves there and practice a social activity. The space is dynamic and full of life for skaters, many artistic video, graphic production, and performance has been produced. As philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1991) has argued, architectural and urban space is made up of the physical places we use (Placa dels Paisos Catalan), the conscious idea we have (Pinon and Valberad), and also people's actual, everyday experiences (skateboarders and other users) (Borden). This infinite and beautiful performance, as an expression of youthful energy and joy, is thus absolutely part of the square. Plaza dels Paisos Catalan has been one of the oldest places in the world subjected to continuous use of skateboarders, even in the recession of skateboarders in Barcelona in the '90s, the square was the main or even only meeting point for resistant skateboarders. For 30 years, apart from being used as a passage the only evidence of human life in the square where the skateboarder performing.

As said before, the neighborhood citizens are still very upset from the initial design and are still waiting for a real public space where they could say this is the place of the Catalan people. The square will be refurbished, and they called RCR arquitectes to think about its future form. It is legitimate to ask for this kind of refurbishment, as said before, the 'plaza dura' not only are seen as denuded of any life they are also implicated in the creation of urban heat effect (Chinchilla , I). RCR studio seems to take the direction of the citizen instead of the conservation of an architectural heritage. In the meanwhile, skateboarders are scared to be evicted from the square. Although street skateboarders don't like to enter politics or negotiate with any top entity, when it is a question of spots of spatial desire, they react in a very organized and civic way. A petition was started in 2020 named SNT 4EVER - Sants forever. Calling for being part of the future discussion of the square, they ask the municipality and the neighborhood district to include them in the future usage of the square but not only them, any citizen that has an interest in having a space to enjoy an activity outside of buying goods or sleeping.

In January 2021, the wall at the end of the small roof started to fall, seeing this, the municipality came and threw down the wall. The skateboarders, that spend many hours repairing the square from cracks left by heavy trucks, saw the destruction of this wall as a complete apathetic feeling from the municipality towards the deplorable state of the square. Even more when you know that the square is one of the most important of the city - the first one you see when you arrive by train in Barcelona.To develop a strong argument, SNT 4EVER got inspired and advised by other cases where skateboarders did obtain a space for the citizen. Malmo, Paris, Lyon, Bordeaux, and Melbourne were thus cited. They also stress how the Born skateplaza is, for now, the only example in Barcelona that succeeded in answering the need and desire of street skateboarders.

As other examples mentioned above, these types of actions are legitimate and often not taken seriously enough. Important "Plaques Tournante" or "spaces of spatial desire" like SANTS are more than just spots, they are at the core of the skateboarding culture and they produce tons of intangible records of the past. This intangible legacy is what skateboarders are fighting for, not the physical object, but the people and what has been produced in the space. By doing so they also fight for a richer space, that could express the desire of citizens.

"Skateboarding in those places suggests that public spaces can be richer than typical shopping malls or high streets, where coffee outlets, branded shops, and chain restaurant abound". (I. Borden, 2014).

Skate urbanism here in that sense, is a bottom-up approach where citizens drive urban design and future usage of the city, they thrive for a magnificent city instead of work, metro, consume, and sleep city.













Spotter started in 2011 in Barbara del Vallès with some skater kids from the town that wanted to create some obstacles on a flat ground found in an abandoned space. Barbera del Vallès is an industrial neighborhood with a population mostly immigrants from inner Spain, there is a clear division between the residential and the industrial fabric, and in between, a sports center was built. Apart from those football camps build by Sergio Busquets, the rest was abandoned. The kids in search of a place to practice rapidly found the abandoned space, which was perfect, a hundred square meters of flat concrete ground. Help by a carpenter's father, they started to build the first object to practice. The skater from there started to build with the leftover anything they could to skate and rapidly got the help of skater builders like Sergi Arena – a professional when it comes to building concrete ramps (Marcos Gomez). The help meant more materials, better techniques, and bigger construction, it rapidly went from a little intervention with some object like rails or little wood panel to jump or do manual to actual concrete ramps.

The process of designing is spontaneous, if someone has an idea and they have the material for it, they will go for it. Although the idea must be argued to be something interested with skate and in relation with the other object. This resulted in an accumulation of ramps that created a path for the skater, so they don't "push" and they end up creating a big bowl. Then what they thought is "How can we get more money to build more" (Marcos Gomez), the space had to be filled up and there are always more ideas than actual material to build. So, around 2015 they started to speak with some shops in Barcelona like FTC and some brands got interested. They got money in exchange to build and make videos for the brands, the mini pad was done with Vans, the ramp on the left by Converse, the curb there by Lewis. With Dickies also, they gave them some clothes to sell, and with the money exchanged they could buy cement to build. It's important to stress that only money was exchanged, the ramps were done by the skater from Barbara, so they also started to get some experience and knowledge about this type of construction.

The kids that started as curious little builders that wanted something to practice their passion were now professionals contracted by skateparks companies to build all other the region, the nation or even the world. On the other hand, the local municipality of Barbara got scared from what started as a small transgressive activity to something bigger that involved many people. They did not understand why they were doing this work, they thought that it had to be somehow lucrative, they didn't believe that all this work was only to create a place to skate. The terrain is not owned by the municipality, it is owned by the Catalan government, and they can't evict the skaters. Although the idea, as with the other DIY spots, is to create refurbishment projects to have a legitimate excuse to remove skaters they don't have the economic means.



Spotter is more about vertical skateboarding, although it started as a street skateboard place it rapidly became more of a vert skatepark with impressive curves. During quarantine one of the skaters started to build another part right next to the terrain wish is the same size (1000sqm), and he made it for street skateboarders. He called it 'El valley DIY' and will host only street obstacles. They have strong relations with other DIY, Cariboo, Bobila and Picnic DIY people from each space come to build and help. The Bobila project has another concept of DIY, they don't work with the skater to build, they work with the brands to get the funds and then the locals build it, skater or not. It creates a new social atmosphere where people from different backgrounds can build and learn from each other.

All in all, there is a clear civic will for desirable and free places to skate, where the community can build around and play. As anarchist urbanists, these autonomous citizens seek without the help of any professional a better and more suitable life. As Colin Ward is suggesting in the Child in the City, this craving to play in the public space is a basic need and is also the most beautiful way of appropriating the environment, by playing. As seen as total guerrillas, not organized at all they are a very define and responsible structure, free to create and focusing on what must be done avoiding any hierarchies and organizational bodies to set in. The only profit claim by this action is the social creative community. The Copenhagen council understood that and accepted it to happen under certain conditions.

In Barcelona, Bobila was recognized also as an alternative public space. Those civic actions suggest that the public space can be a process, that changes other times and is driven by the user. The current cities will never stop having leftover space; intangible spaces that are lost between speculative conflicts. DIY skateboarders are now part of our cities and make them different, they suggest that another way of living in the city is possible, a more collaborative, free, and creative way.













Plaça dels Angels (from Catalan, Square of the Angels) is located in the center of the old city of Barcelona and is one of the subtantial examples of the relation between skateboarding and urban space. Considered as the "Mecca" of skateboarding by many skateboarders it is probably the most exposed spot in skateboard video and magazine in the world counting for many followers on social media. The place configuration is perfect for skateboarding, even too perfect as skateboarders often argue that it was designed for them. The square was designed by Richard Meire as the square in front of the museum of contemporary art of Barcelona. When built-in 1995, the neighborhood Raval, named "xino" neighborhood, the square was used only by the locals and was not very appreciated. It was a continuation of the Barcelona get pretty urbanization from the top that was following since the '90s. The square was another example of a plaza dura, with no green and little urban furniture. A cheap way to build and to create public squares, especially in terms of maintenance.

The context is important here, unlike SANTS, MACBA was in a central location and was very well connected, its access was easy and the appropriation by the locals was immediate. Here the difference is in the neighborhood, The Raval or Xino neighborhood was famous for being very dangerous at night and even during the day. The Xino neighborhood was famous and it is still today is for drug dealers, prostitution and other informal and negative usage .Those were the main usage in the Plaza dels Angels at first after it was built. Pol Martin recall:

"If you go there, if they don't know you, you don't come out with clothes". Pol Martin

The museum suffered from that, tourists and Barcelona residents were not going to the museum due to the neighbor and the square. The square was full of homeless and drug traficant but on one day an unexpected activity appeared. The first skater that discovered the square might have been shocked by the number of possibilities this space was given for him. Its imagination must have been blown up at this moment, and soon the square was used by them. "They spent many hours here, and controlled everything that was happening, even avoiding rubbery" Security guard (X, Camino, 2010), Skaters started to be very effective to appropriate the space and remove little by little the bad behaviors in the space. The spot was still not skated every day, local skaters were meeting in a square close to MACBA, plaza cathedral. And the main skateboarding places were still PARA.LEL, Sants, and Plaza Universidad. Soon the museum took the opportunity to put the image of skateboarding as a publicity campaign, which would help them to remove the fear felt by tourists and Barcelona residents when coming to the museum. Skaters were giving a new image of the neighborhood, although not the perfect image awaited by the municipality, it was still giving a strong sense of youth and sport. This created in the neighborhood, with the addition brought by skate videos and foreign skate teams, an explosion of skateboard shops, and around the year 2000, the square was blown out and describe as one of the best skate spots in the world. The square started to host many skateboarders from all other the world, and it became a pil-grimage place for many skate companies. In 2003, when the Turo skatepark was turned down, the skaters from their split, some went to La Guineietua and some to MACBA, adding skaters in the square. As always with space for skateboarding, the community makes the space and MACBA started to become one of the most important meeting points for many groups of skateboarders in Barcelona.

The skaters negotiated with the museum a schedule, every day after 7 pm – when the museum was close - Skaters could skate on the upper part of the square and they could also skate the whole day on Tuesdays and Sundays. Skaters were respecting this schedule and were very respectful, trying to be as much as civic as possible. When the 2006 civic law was put in place, municipal police started to evict skateboarders from MACBA, distributing fines every day. Some even said that even only having a skate in your hand could get you a fine (translated from Spanish, X. Camino). Many skaters moved to Sants since it was freer. Although, skaters kept on going on the square skating and the influence that MACBA had on the skateboarding world kept on growing, attracting skaters from all over the world. "Here there are many different groups. For example, Brazilians, Colombians, Venezuelans, Italians, French.." (Tom Morata, a usual MACBA street skateboarder from Barcelona).

In 2009, by the pressure of the citizen living in the neighborhood with their will to reconquer a space that they claim theirs and because of the noise and damages created by skateboarding the municipality started to produce rumors that they would redesign the square so that skateboarding will be removed. In summer 2009, the square received some modification, that didn't remove skateboarders from the square. Instead, both parties won from the modification, although the skateboarders lost the Big four – Four blocks of 50cm creating a gap of 2 meters, very praised and famous by the skateboard community – that became the Big 3, the main square was redesigned for the better. With this new design, a block was moved so to create less conflict with pedestrians. With this in mind, we can understand how problems link to skateboarding in public spaces can be solved with design.



There was also the idea to create a vast skatepark on the outskirt of Ciudad Vella (the old city), to legitimate the use of skate stoppers in the zone with the most conflict. Due to a lack of budget, this never happened.

After ten years of intensive use, the schedules that were first installed and the good behaviors of skaters started to fade. The disproportionate growth of practitioners led to too many conflicts and complaints from the neighborhood. In 2018, many protests were held in the street against the use of the Plaza dels angels by the skater, many complaints were written to the municipality, it was in the local newspaper, the municipality had to do something.

In 2019 the municipality asked the architect Pol martin to redesign the square so no skater will be able to skate in MACBA. Pol Martin, an experienced skateboarder was against and decided to write a study to show why it is important to preserve skateboarding in Plaza dels angels and good practices when it comes to deal with skateboarders. Together with the skaters, the museum, and the city hall, they agreed to put back the schedules and start a campaign to reeducate skateboarders. Media like MACBA life, El Patin, or Barcelona skateboarding started an international campaign. Save Macba was created that emphasizes good civic behavior in public. Skateboarding signs with "Atencio Skater" written on it were placed at the entrance of the square. The schedules were installed again with the use of the city cleaner. At 9 pm, the city cleaner will come and start cleaning the square, evicting at the same time the skaters - Skater does not skate when it rains or when the ground is humid, it destroys the skateboard. Until now, and with the pandemic the situation is calm, but according to Pol Martin, the campaign has to continue and every party will have to continue to put efforts into this to arrive at a common agreement

During the first years of the space appropriation, skateboarder guaranteed order and peace in a space without identity. It took time for the skateboarders to fully appropriate and create a liveable and relatively safe space. However with its fame in the skateboarding world, pilgrimage, and tourism, the situation became uncontrollable. It is hard for the skaters to be responsible when so many different groups are mixed, creating a vibrant but sometimes lawless crowd. Skateboarders need to be civic and responsible if they want to continue skating in the square and at the same time, the municipality has to continue the discussion and understand how important the role of skateboarding was in making the plaza works.













Often forgotten, skateboarding shops are not just places that are used to sell the skate products, they are active social places where skateboarders meet and watch videos together, and more than that, they were also the first spaces to implement the idea of skateboarding schools.

In Barcelona, Al carrer skate shop started to teach kids to skate in front of the shop. The space is located in the Born neighborhood in the central district of Barcelona and is a public space surrounded by residential houses. The space is small and consisted of three stairs and a smooth granite pavement, perfect for the initiation of street skateboarding. Street skateboarding is the most popular practice of skateboarding and relies massively on street skate videos made by famous brands. There is a strong will to practice grinds, flip tricks, and have style on the board. The best way to teach this is on the street themselves and so they decided to make them practice in front of the shop. The neighbors, because of the noise, told them to do this in another place. They found a basketball court next to a parking lot that had a flat concrete ground. They had to deal with the basketball player for a time to skate.

After a while, they obtain what they wanted, a place to skate. The space in question was right next to the Basketball camp, a place in a quiet desertic and central area of Barcelona. Measuring approximately 500 square meters, it was used to play pétanque and hosted a little parking lot. The municipality called Pol Martin, a skater known by the skate shop to design the new skate area. Pol knew about the current design of skateplaza around the world, he knew the architects designing in Malmo and saw them measuring skate spot in Barcelona. His motto was:

"why do we design skate spaces with references from skateparks all other the world while we could reproduce our city".Pol Martin

This is how he designed the skateplaza, copying famous spots around Barcelona: PARAL.LEL, MACBA, and Arc de Triomphe. The design had to be the most possible integrated to the city, his idea was the traditional public plaza facing the important building. The plaza is designed following the grid of the building and it serves itself as an introduction to it as if they were both one design like MACBA. This design also came out on the study he made in order to save skaters from their eviction from MACBA. The place is very much appreciated by the skateboarder community, especially the street one. When MACBA is full or at night when lights are gone, they go to the square to skate.



This hybrid type of public square that includes the skaters as legitimate users is the first step towards a skate friendly city. Accepting how beneficial skateboarding can be while at the same time reinforcing the community by designing answers to an always more growing civic will is the possible answer for a skate friendly city. However, making cities considering skateboarder's desires is one thing, but can skateboarders help to make friendly cities for everyone?







CHAPTER FOUR: SKATE DOTS IN BARCELONA

PRACTICE - BASED DESIGN DESIGN ACTIONS

The most important aspect when dealing with the skateboard community is to understand skaters by discussing with them. Skaters are from very different backgrounds, socioeconomic positions, race, gender, young or old and they all want one thing: skating.

Whatever the skatepark, ramp, rail, stairs, or trash with a little jump in front, they will skate it. We know that through design we can prevent the practice or completely allow it. An argument that goes in favor of public place integrated or allowing skateboarding is the fact that skateboards can disappear, as seen in history, thus leaving the purpose-built space with no purpose. This argument is of no relevance nowadays since skateboarding is now increasingly part of our societies: it is now a legitimate sport, and being part of the Olympics its popularity is not questioned. Still, it is relevant since this argument shows one of the most important faculty that these urban activities offer: its ability to be scalable.

Unlike other sports that need a particular sized facility to practice, skateboard space can be immense, with limitless dimensions - a whole downhill for kilometers - or very small - a little pedestrian curb on a road. With the current pandemic, skateboarders have experienced skateboarding at home, with many videos in social media showing creative skateboarders skating in their room at the expense of the room itself. This phenomenon shows how the spaces for skateboarding can be limitless, any shape can work. We have also seen skateboarders (such as professional Jordan Maxham) adapting to skate stopper, Paul O'Connor describes how skateparks are a continuously changing phenomenon, a process that is modified depending on how skateboarders use the city.

Since skateparks are scalable and easy to implement in difficult terrain, it is often chosen by the city as the best activity when there is a need to activate lost spaces thus gentrifying the surrounding by maybe excluding others. Again here Paul O'Connor explains how skateparks are hybrid, in the sense that cities try to prevent skateboarding in their public space while creating skateparks. The ability of skaters to adapt to any scale is very favorable for their integration in the public space, it is why many skaters are already part of the public sphere. Spaces like MACBA which is issued form a will to regenerate, gentrify a neighborhood shows that skateboarder can be valuable also when it is in the city. And when skateboarders get organized, like in the case of La Guineueta, they show civic behavior and will favorable to have a living together and understanding situation. A good practice would be to understand exactly how many skaters are in Barcelona. If there are 85 millions skaters worldwide (Skateboard Statistics), Barcelona is hosting many, since it is considered one of the best cities to skate in the world and the best city in Europe. In Melbourne, a comparison was made between the number of skateboarders in the city and their related spaces for skateboarding with other physical practices like football. To make a comparison, there are approximately 362,300 practitioners of urban sport (skateboarding, rollerblading, and scooters) in Melbourne for 2400 sqm of terrain, while there are 104,900 practitioners of football for 156,00 sqm of terrain. The comparison is biased, for the reason that football requires a large definite space whereas skateboarders uses the space of the city that are not integrated with the calculation because informal. A very straightforward way to increase the amount of terrain is to recognized spaces that are already used by skateboarders in the city and improve them to make it able to host skateboarders in a less conflictive manner.

Then spaces need to be designed for the use of skateboarders but not only. Nowadays the current trends are changing, many skateparks are integrating the concept of "plaza" to allow more than one use. Pol Martin but many other designers now integrate those ideas in the design of public spaces. There is not a perfect solution when designing with skateboarder, what is important is to design for them, for what they need.

"Each group of skaters, each skater has its vision of skateboard, this is why DIY will never stop" Marcos Gomez

Skateparks are often the methods chosen by the city to solve the problems of skaters. In reality, the municipality is transforming the "problem" (street skateboarding) into a bigger one, skateparks are mostly used by new skateboarders that with time, some will become street skateboarders. The good practices would be, as many other cities have been through thanks to the good communication of the skateboard community, to start by as mentioned above, discussing. Skaters tend to not trust any form of system, especially street skateboarders since their practice are illegal. The government needs to be responsive towards skateboard-ers and help them creating associations, organize events, exhibitions and integrate them with different actors. Skateboarding is a vanguard movement about how we use public space and should never be thought about as something destructive and meaningless. Gustav Eden stresses how the problem associated with skateboarding in public space are directly linked with design. The noise is created by the incorrect pavement, the damage by the non-appropriate materials, and the conflicts by the disposition of the obstacles in the space and its relative size. If the design of squares was appealing for skateboarding practice and afterward the practices excluded by the use of design (I.e. skate stoppers), the image showed to the skateboard community is very negative. Skate stoppers should be avoided as much as possible, instead, the squares or the obstacles should be redesign.

However, like in Malmo, when the city is now supporting skaters and the skate industry, that skateboarders have their voices, and the city implement and redesign many skateboarding spaces, how to make a better city with skateboarders? The answer to that is participatory design, social engagement, and community development. The newly designed spaces should be thought together with the local community, as well as the policies around them. David knight (Pushing Boarders, 2018) stresses how chasing the car might be a good point, so much effort is put into accommodating something that kills us, while wear and tear produced by skateboarders are seen as a disaster. Policies in that sense, are very important and they should be redrawn; reconsidering what should be allowed in public spaces. Skateboarders, by this civic will to remain in the space, started acquiring knowledge about planning rights, by winning some fight they know that planning can be a popular practice. In that sense "planning must be reconceived as something that we all do when we need to, whether we are seeking to expand our home or our city, or to protect somewhere important to us" (Knight, D. 2014).

"The whole process has shown the power of community activism, it doesn't take many people to start a movement, we must continually remind those in power that they work for us and must represent our best interests and not their own if we don't then it should be no surprise that they do not take us into account" Stuart Maclure

WHAT ARE SKATE DOTS?

Skate dots are little interventions, like tactical urbanism aiming at integrating the practice of skateboarding in the public realm. City mill skate, a research project using a shared design process to integrate long term skate spaces within the UCL - University College London - campus, describe skate dots as a copy of interesting street furniture you might come across in the street that is skateable and open to interpretation. They also argue that this kind of small-scale intervention makes them more egalitarian and inclusive than conventional skateparks. They are also numerous, creating a trail almost like a sculptural park, helping enrich the skateboard cognitive map. The shapes of those final skate dots are open to interpretation and they asked the community through social media and workshops to design and think of what could be possibly those skate dots. They also go directly to meet with the skateboard community and ask them what they want, making them part of the design.

The idea of skate dots was first expressed in 2005 by Matt Johnston, it came from a 2005 paper called, "Integrated Skateable Terrain in Seattle," authored by SPAC member Matthew Lee Johnston criticize that the city of Seattle has invested a lot of money in what he considered a "wasteful excesses of concrete that pass for skateparks" while they could have done with the same amount of money "32 skate dots throughout the city". For him, a skate dot is also a little permanent intervention very "skateable" - offering the maximum of possibilities and built with the right materials - and very minimal. As said before, and as stressed by Matt, skaters don't need much to have fun, a flat surface with some granite ledges would be perfect. In 2007, the city of Seattle, seeing a very huge increase of skateboard practitioners in their city decided to build more skateparks incorporating the skate dot idea. They described it as "integrated skateable terrain" (CITYWIDE SKATEPARK PLAN) that can go up to 140 square meters and could be "designed to avoid conflicts between skaters and other park users".

On a similar branch, Melbourne also adopted these little designs into some parks around the city developing the "Skate Melbourne plan" the aim is to compete in putting the city as a great place for skaters and to include skateboarders in the city. The city plan for skateboarding of Melbourne is a 10 years plan aiming at refurbishing and creating more suitable space for skateboarding, it is led through a participatory process where skateboarder but also any citizen can access and develop. A very relevant approach that also includes the skate community in those decisions as designers but also as planners. The city understood that through design skateboards can be included. Bordeaux also agreed to meet with the skateboard community and allowed them to decide by themselves the future skate master plan of the city. Leo Valls, a professional skateboarder, from professional skater became a planner and helped the skate community created a skate object to implement all other the city. This approach is very relevant, skaters as urban planners, negotiating the city to include performance in the street. The difference with Bordeaux is that those skate dots have multi-usage and that they use a particular symbology to be recognizable. When seen in the street, their bright color makes them a skate landmark for skaters and for the common user indicating that: be careful, skate can occur here.

Skateboarding is now intensely immersed in the worlds of both sport and neoliberal capitalism, being a fashion and an Olympic sport, its nature is manipulated and used by city planners and big events to make profits and change the true values of skateboarding. Skate dots are a good path in between, accepting the spontaneous and appropriate nature of skateboarding that focuses on the body, space, and personal biography (Find a curb, O'Connor).

As seen before, a major problem with spaces for skateboarding is the dominating male structure that appears spontaneously and tends to disenfranchise others not included in the social group. This is changing, since more girls, every year are starting to skate, but having dedicated space for everyone is a hard task. Skate Dots could intervene in that sense, providing inclusive spaces for the one being excluded. Tobias Coughlin-Bogue (2020) describe how dispersing skate stop other the city helps in defusing a rather malignant masculinity. Another aspect that could drive away this masculinity is the participative approach of skate dots, Having their voice heard in the public space could help different groups express themselves without the fear of being excluded.

"This is a challenge that cities are facing: How do you incorporate skateboarding and people who want to engage in the activity into the urban landscape in a cohesive and coprehensive way?" Cassie Owens

SKATE DOTS COGNITIVE MAP IN BCN

Three maps were produced to identify specific locations for future design and specific refurbishment of already used spaces for skateboarding. The maps are focused on the Ciudad Vella, the old center of Barcelona, where the concentration of skateboarders is the most intense. The first map identifies the main spaces for skateboarding located in the Ciudad Vella:





The second map identifies new routes and new possible locations for the implementation of skate dots. The map shows also that informal spaces for skateboarding where coexistence with the citizen through design is possible are becoming formal.



The Third map applies the design concepts of Gustav Eden and propose the refurbishmnet of mulitple spaces with addition of skate dots. Conflicts can be sloved with design in most of the cases, and those formalize design can encourage a better lived city.















At Last, I present some skate dots I have designed, with the reinvention of materials and furniture used in the urban fabric. Each new space and old spaces for skateboarding that will be redesign should come from a participatory approach. As the city Mill Skate project, here the skate dots are a process, coming from the participation of citizens interested in such spaces. From wheelchair users to Parcours practitioners, anyone can express his imagination, influencing directly the architect drawing. Those drawings emphasizing the "see it to be it" notion, where often examples are very important in leading diversity, especially with skateboarding.







The future of skateboarding spaces in our cities is still uncertain, terrains are very diverse and with the Olympics, one terrain – skateparks – might prevail even more. Skateparks are not the scapegoat here, as it gives an amazing social space for skateboarders but also many other users to play in the urban realm. However, it signifies that skateboarding is mainly seen as a sport while skateboarding is a culture. A culture that seeks recognition and understanding around the many misconceptions that it faces.

Most of the time the main problem of skateboarder eviction is the cost of maintenance included in the public space provision. So mainly the response to that should not be the eviction of a social group but a better design. Better design means understanding the user and its needs, accommodating them rather than excluding them.

This thesis aims at writing about what are the current discussion when it comes to skate urbanism and reflect on our cities as a place for everyone. It has shown that Barcelona is a very fertile ground for skateboarding and has a big role in the skateboard culture as a skate 'mecca' with many relevant case studies. Skateboarding should be a perk for urban planning rather than a disease. It should be a perk because it asks a fundamental question, which is what kind of spaces we want our cities to have? Through everyday tactics, association, and petitions, street skateboarders ask this question, they show that it is possible to influence planning, to be resilient.

A perk because skateboarders can provide a service, a testing ground for the city itself.

It has also shown a relevant design proposal for Barcelona to become more skate friendly but also more inclusive, changing also the skateboard culture that heavily relies on its spaces.

When starting writing about this thesis, I was shocked by the amount of knowledge produced around skateboarding. I thought, few were written, while it is discussed around many fields of research, urban planning sociology, religion, sport, design and still a lot can be produced. Biographically, my point of view changed as well, more than public space, skateboarders ask a question about planning, they have an important role in the city of the future, driving decision from the bottom. They also claim for a holistic usage of public spaces, and not a segregated one.

Skateboarding is fun, it is about having fun with your friends, and the more we will give freedom to that, the more it will give freedom to everyone.

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