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Skateparks as hybrid elements of the city

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Abstract

This research argues that the spaces of skateboarding are hybrid. This is evidenced by not only the construction of numerous skateparks throughout the world, and their incorporation of design elements from the city, but the exclusion of skateboarders from urban spaces through hostile architecture. More specficially, skateparks, which are unique among sport facilities, are shown to be evolving hybrid places in a continuing dialogue with the city under which they are geographically and politically contained.

Introduction

Cities possess an elaborate density of social and political meaning difficult to fathom. Consider one aspect of the city: skateparks – recreational spaces for skateboarders, rollerbladers, BMX and scooters to play and practise. This paper argues that, unlike ballparks and playgrounds, skateparks are hybrid, remaking urban elements such as stairs, rails, kerbs and barriers to re-create a simulacra of the natural built environment. This enhances the interaction between the city and its citizenry, demonstrating not only the influence of skateboarders in the city but the interactivity of skateboarding's use of urban space. Unlike other zones of the city, the skatepark is a place designed through subcultural practice, through the creative re-imagining and colonization of space by urban youth.

Skateboarders' transformation of cities can be seen in the responses of town planners to their presence with the introduction of legitimate skateboard areas, but also through the introduction of designed non-skateable spaces. The latter includes 'no skateboarding' signage and 'skate stopper' hostile architecture which aims to exclude skateboarders from urban spaces. Town planning and urban design now represent a hybrid interplay between skateboarders and their subcultural practices. By seeing skateboarders and their culture as a way of being, comprehending and acting in the world that has complex but discernible relations with urban space, it is possible to reimagine healthy, diverse and accessible urban spaces (see amongst others Borden 2019). The contribution of this paper is to argue that hybridity is a valid way to approach the understanding of skateparks. The hybrid metaphor

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reveals an ongoing interplay between morphing forms of space, be they found, prohibited, legitimate or self-constructed. This hybridity spills over to social processes involving not just skateboarders and architects, but also public and private capital, and a diverse array of advocates and accrued knowledge. This study proposes that skateparks are a truly hybrid phenomenon and ultimately a work forever in progress.

How to apply hybridity

Hybridity designates dynamic reciprocal processes: ecological undercurrents that are at once natural, they are found in areas designated as wild, and artificial, such as urban environments. Street art provides an obvious urban application, broadly understood as uncommissioned images found in public urban spaces. As Martin Irvine notes:

> Street artists take the logic of appropriation, remix, and hybridity in every direction: arguments, ideas, actions, performances, interventions, inversions, and subversions are always being extended into new spaces, remixed for contexts and forms never anticipated in earlier postmodern arguments. (2012, 247)

As if to emphasize this hybridity, the graffiti artist REVOK MSK sent the clothing company H&M a cease and desist letter for using his imagery in an advertisement, imagery that was painted illegally and bore no marks as being his own (Rao 2018). H&M eventually ceded to the letter, as if to admit their advertisement was criminal, an advertisement that benefited from REVOK's own criminal act. Is street art artistic? Is it criminal? Is it subversive? Is it a basis for capital? The H&M case demonstrates that street art exists at the intersection of these questions – a hybrid of contrary concepts that require analysis as a hybrid concept.

Too often hybridity is used uncritically in scholarly work. It is presented as a term that requires no-unpacking, as self-evident and widely understood. It is tempting to look towards its origins as a source of orientation. Hybridity originates from the Latin *hybrida*, a term used to classify the 'offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar' (Cashmore 1996, 165). It became part of a discourse of racial purity promoting the evils of miscegenation during colonial expansion and a concept that was subversive to the idea of Empire (Pieterse 1989). Hybridity is exemplified in the attraction between East and West, representing all that is different and alike between races, becoming a powerful egalitarian challenge to racial hierarchy.

The use and meaning of hybridity further altered in the face of social change brought by the end of colonialism, new technologies, mobilities and economic liberalization (Kraidy 2005). A key proponent of hybridity, Homi Bhabha (1994), built a robust postcolonial discussion around the idea of hybrid identities leading to the celebration of hybridity being no longer a biological flaw but now an esteemed cultural trait. As a result, much of the discussion on hybridity has been anchored in 'the visible effects of difference within identity as a consequence of the incorporation of foreign elements' (Papastergiadis 2012, 117). However, with the emergence of hybridity as visual style, seeking the visual proof of mixing, also came its uncritical use. This has led to a two-fold critique of hybridity that argues that: (1) hybridity is superficial in its championing of visible fusion or 'melting pot' (Pieterse 2004); and (2) hybridity is in itself a contradiction that bears little meaning as mixing implies

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essential categories or 'kinds', involving the 'nemesis' of hybridity: authenticity and essentialism (Hutnyk 2000). Furthermore, if hybridity is process and hybrid is the product, the hybrid itself ends up conforming to a new essentialist category. However, the proponents of hybridity argue it is essentialist thinking that is the flaw, not the theory of hybridity which in itself advocates an 'ongoing process and does not care about origin or end' (Petersson 2011, 169).

This paper advocates hybridity as a valuable analytical tool as it pushes people to surrender their binaries and static essentialist categories and look at culture and its material effects as an ensemble – as an ecological dynamism. The temptation to assert an origin is clearly more essentialist than the continuum that hybridity suggests. Ang (2001) argues that hybridity is a self-evident fact identifiable everywhere. As a prosaic fact there must also be vigilance against celebrating hybridity and instead a thorough engagement in its everyday manifestations (O'Connor 2011). Fahlander (2007) explains that hybridity is not simply mixture but a process of encounters and emergent dialogue. It is flawed to think of a crude bricolage or juxtaposition of elements, but helpful to think in terms of influence and osmosis. By engaging with this approach it is understood, paraphrasing Rushdie (1991), that hybridity brings 'newness' into the world.

Consider the newness available to a hybrid 'gaze' that aids in the dynamic understanding of cities and their social process. Graham (2018) for example shows how appraising the city as a vertical entity reveals all manner of hybrid interconnections. Skyscrapers become not just monoliths reaching into the sky, but echoes of the mineshafts and diverse global territories used to excavate the rich resources used in their construction. It has been argued previously that hybridity holds great potential for analytical application, not simply as theory but also as method (O'Connor 2018). In advocating hybridity this paper guards against the charge of essentialism understanding this as primarily a hurdle from flawed articulation, a flaw this paper aims to correct.

In visual culture, hybridity brings new streams together generating novel practices while promoting understanding through dialogic analysis. Consider again the example of street art, where, as Irvine states:

> Street art since the 1990s is a kind of manifesto-in-practice for the complex forms of globalization, cultural hybridity, and remix which are increasingly the norm for life in global, networked cities. Street art's embrace of multiple mediums, techniques, materials, and styles makes it an exemplar of hybridity, remix, and post-appropriation practices now seen to be a defining principle of "contemporary" culture. (27)

REVOK's own work, commercially appropriated by H&M, involved a machine that could spray eight cans of spray paint at a time, producing paralleling lines that moved not unlike elevation maps, a machine REVOK himself appropriated from two other artists without direct permission. While questions of intellectual property rights were certainly made visible by REVOK's cease and desist lawsuit against H&M, these were not considerations previously, further emphasizing the acknowledged hybridity and consequent appropriation norms in street art subculture.

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Applying hybridity to the city and skatepark

An initial hybrid example of the skatepark is provided by Hong Kong, where a large concrete bowl was built in 2014 complete with blue tiles and coping blocks. The concave form was influenced by the bowls of numerous skateparks constructed in the United States, whose own design directly connects to the backyard swimming pools of Southern California. This design can be traced to Finland, home of architectural pioneer Alvar Aalto, who in 1938 designed and built the first swimming pool with a rounded floor flowing from shallow to deep in the shape of a kidney bean, an organic form inspired by his theory that architecture is part of biology (Trufelman 2017). These 'kidney bowls' are now found in skateparks across the world, complete with traditional pool details such as rounded edges called 'coping', tile edging, stairs and even filtration drains – which skaters soon call 'deathboxes'. The pool transformed quickly from a found space in the 1970s to a constructed space for skateboarding in 1977 with the opening of Pipeline skatepark in California (Borden 2001) (see Figure 1). In short, skatepark bowl terrains are repurposed by the creative uses of skateboarders in the built environment and prefigure the inclusion of the kidney bowl in the skatepark.

While skateboarding's repurposing of architecture is visible in skateparks, it also influences design outside of the skatepark, as exclusion. Architects now design prohibitive features – hostile architectures – to further prevent skateboarders from inhabiting urban spaces. In this process both the skatepark and the city speak paradoxically of skateboard culture, as both included by the creation of skateparks and excluded in the creation of hostile architecture; a hybrid phenomenon. Through the following pages further examples provide ways to understand hybridity as an urban ecology of unfolding push/pull processes and dialogue (Glenney and Mull 2018).

The hybrid dialogue develops from the ways in which skateboard culture has emerged from backyard pools to urban streets. The popularity of 'street skating', which began in the late 1980s, has seen skateboarders use mundane urban design, such as kerbs, steps and handrails as part of their play. This has resulted in perceived damage and defacement to public property – damage that is ultimately just scuff marks and waxed surfaces barely discernable to the public – and the criminalization and exclusion of skateboarders from many urban centres (Németh 2006; Woolley, Hazelwood, and Simkins 2011; Jenson, Swords, and Jeffries 2012). Part of this is manifest in designed exclusion with city centres incorporating features that pose barricades and obstacles to the type of activities skateboarders pursue. As part of the hybrid ecology of the city, contemporary architecture has evolved to be sentient of skateboard culture. Answering Sassen's question, 'does the city have speech?' (2013) this study argues that indeed it does; it speaks of its values and its principles. The city comes to speak of skateboarders, as the design of the city represents them in their exclusion. The skatepark is presented as redress for skateboarders being moved out of city centres. However, skateboarders continue an ambivalent dialogue with both the city and the skatepark that mark both in physical and temporal terms, a dialogue that reveals the logic of modern cities and the ways people are managed and contained. More squarely, the subcultural creativity of skateboarding that was once socially peripheral and even

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subversive, is now recognized as possessing the hallmarks of self-starting creativity necessary to weather the capricious precarity of the globalized world.

Cultural practice and skateparks

Skateboarding itself is a hybrid, constituted out of elements from sport (Beal 1995), subversive activity (Borden 2001), youth sub-culture (Dinces 2011) or lifestyle culture (Wheaton 2013). Utilizing ethnographic field work, this research works with the notion of skateboarding as cultural practice because it resonates with the practitioners and also responds to the significance that skateboarders attribute to their collective history, their shared values, and also the rich vernacular they have created that draws on embodied, material and spatial knowledge from their own ecological niche. This was highlighted by a veteran skateboarder interviewed about his concerns regarding the rules imposed by the local government leisure body on the use of skateparks in Hong Kong. He complained in simple and earnest terms that the government had to recognize that 'skateboarding is a culture', skateboarders have specific values that they will not compromise (personal correspondence).

The uniqueness of skateboard culture is supported by an ethnographic study illustrating that the various safety rules at most skateparks, which include mandatory helmet use, are inconsistent with skateboarding culture's flouting of social norms about safety (O'Connor 2016). In spite of acknowledging the danger of skateboarding, participants generally choose to not wear helmets (Lustenberger and Demetrios 2017). In a survey study of a local skateboarder population in Vermont, the authors identified several social challenges as an explanation: perceived peer approval, social identity with a peer group, and social bias against loss of these social supports if helmets were to be used (Glenney et al. n.d.). Not wearing helmets is part of skateboarding's cultural practice, placing them at significant odds with many skateparks that make helmet use mandatory. Therefore, skateparks continue to be shadowed by concerns about safety and related issues of liability and legality (Borden 2001).

As early as 1959, there was talk of outlawing skateboarding from the streets of Los Angeles (Yochim 2013) to protect pedestrians on sidewalks and pavements, and also to protect skateboarders on streets sharing space with cars. It became clear that skateboarders needed a recreational space to practise and perform their craft. Early skateboard parks constructed in California during the 1960s were perceived as 'unchallenging', a concern that continued into the 1970s when skatepark construction began to rapidly grow (Borden (2001). Therefore, skateparks experimented with hybrid urban features that 'exaggerated' what skateboarders had used in their towns and cities: linear runs with curved obstacles, banks and transitions rising to vertical walls. The explosion of these hybrid skateparks in the mid-to-late 1970s also indicated a normalization of skateboarding in that it was popularly recognized, accepted and practised (Yochim 2013). However, by the end of the 1970s skateboarding experienced a sharp decline in popularity.

The rise and fall of skateboarding between the 1970s and mid-1990s is well documented (Borden 2001). What is of consequence to this discussion is the boom in skatepark construction noted at the start of this century. In an excellent analysis of the renewed

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popularity of skateparks, Ocean Howell highlights that the number of skateboarders between 1995 and 2005 rose from 4.5 million to 20 million in the United States (2008). The fluctuating number of skateparks in the USA parallels these changes. In 1982 there were 190 skateparks in operation throughout the country; as of 2014 estimates suggest that there are approximately 3500 skateparks in the United States (Transworld 2014) and over 7751 skateparks globally (Concrete Disciples 2015). What is remarkable about these figures is that they highlight the mainstream nature of skateboarding, not simply in youth culture, but also as a recognized and endorsed physical and social activity by parents, teachers and local governments with even the Centre for Disease Control in the USA supporting its activities to encourage an active and healthy generation of young people (Transworld 2014).

This renaissance of skatepark development is also matched by recognition of skateparks as part of urban historical heritage. This was demonstrated in September 2014 when the Rom Skatepark in Essex, England, was listed as a heritage site (Borden 2014). The history of skateboarding is documented and reproduced in skateboard culture and brings with it a motivation to preserve important locations that have become meaningful. The Florida based Skateboard Heritage Foundation is a non-profit organization that seeks to protect 'legacy' skateparks and preserve the cultural heritage of skateboarding. This cultural heritage is further exemplified by Montreal, Canada's most famous 'Big O', a pedestrian tunnel built for the 1976 Olympics soon recruited as a skate culture icon. To make way for expanding the sports stadium it was moved – rather than destroyed – at great expense for its significant cultural value to skateboarding (Beal 2013). So influential is the Big O, that a replica is the main feature of a skatepark in Golden, Colorado, USA.

Skateboarding has become legitimate, incorporated as an Olympic sport and recognized as a prosocial activity (Gilchrist and Wheaton 2017). Skateboarders embody a neo-liberal ethos in the personal responsibility of their own entertainment and risk (Howell 2008), and often work as catalysts to urban and economic regeneration (Snyder 2017). Skateparks are a symbol of this legitimation and as a result they are able to enhance and extend the diversity of skateboarding communities. In fieldwork, a number of adults aged 30 and older were encountered who have begun to start skateboarding because they saw a skatepark near where they lived (O'Connor 2017). To these individuals skateboarding became an option and a reality when they had access to a legitimate space to engage in it. For many skateboarders this seems an inauthentic response to the desire to skateboard. Skateparks provide access but can also be containment devices, or 'quarantine' (Borden 2019). The skatepark can be understood as passive and domestic, something to consume rather than hunted like a skate spot in the city, conflicting with a strong drive in skateboard culture to go and find spaces with potential to skate. Thus, skateboarding culture has a strong ethic of creativity, exploration and innovation, and the evolution of the design of skateparks is sensitive to this drive.

The DIY nature of skateboarding and skatepark creation is also absorbed into the neoliberal framework, as skateboarders are presented increasingly as having a positive influence in the areas in which they choose to skateboard. The key example of this is the Burnside skateboard project in Portland, Oregon, where skateboarders in 1990 decided to build their own skatepark in a vacant area underneath a bridge in the peripheries of the city. Within four

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years the project was sanctioned by the local authorities who benefited from the gentrifying affect on the local community, influencing a drop in crime and the clearing out of homeless people from the same area (Borden 2001; Howell 2008). The Burnside project and also the Undercroft in London's Southbank (Brown 2014) created a movement of DIY built skateparks (Gilligan 2014). These are appropriated places that have found recognition as skateparks and also icons of contemporary cultural heritage. Even in cases where cities have successfully excluded skateboarding, public figures have lent credibility to skateboarding's use of city space, as in the infamous case of Love Park in Philadelphia where the park's designer, Ed Bacon, skated in solidarity through the park at the age of 92 (Howell 2008).

More importantly, as DIY parks are expressions of the self-reliance ethic of its participants – built by skaters for skaters – they are more protected from society's social and legal rules and standards. Thus, these DIY spaces are not skateparks, areas designated for skateboarding activities, which only around 15% of skateboarders frequent, but more 'skate-reserves' where cultural elements of risk and play take centre stage, helping to explain why more than 34% skateboarders frequently use DIY spaces (Transworld 2016). Not unlike skateparks in South Korea, DIY spaces are extensions of home-life; it is common to see open drinking, fires, BBQs, bands and even sleeping. In addition, unlike skateparks, DIY skateboarding is firmly accepted in skateboard films and magazines. Hence, these are not city spaces – spaces informed by city-planning and design – but rather urban spaces informed by the planning and design of the citizens, and thereby used more readily by them.

What is clear from this short history of the ebb and flow of skateboard culture and skateparks is that throughout its timeline, skateboarding has seen various incarnations and levels of popularity that run parallel to skatepark solvency. Surprisingly, the more connections a skatepark makes to urban space, the more robust the skatepark becomes, shaped also by a DIY ethic and the entrepreneurial creativity of skateboard culture, a takeoff point for observing these spaces as hybrid. In discussing the hybridity of skateparks it is demonstrated that within skateboard culture these facilities are very much desired, yet also contested. Similarly, the political dynamics highlighted by Howell are explored and reveal the ambiguous value of skateparks more generally.

Skateparks as hybrid

The hybridity of skateparks illustrates the ongoing encounter between skateboarders and the urban environment. The very first successful skateparks built in the United States aimed to mimic the environments that skateboarders had come to use, often found spaces such as drainage banks, hills and empty swimming pools. The example of the skatepark kidney bowl was shown as an excellent primary example of the hybridity of skatepark features. One of the first bowls was designed and built at the Pipeline skatepark in California in 1977 and was celebrated as a terrain relevant to skateboarders. It also received criticism for not being similar enough to a swimming pool. Skateboarders noted the absence of pool tiles and coping blocks standard in backyard pools (Borden 2001). Skateboarders desired these elements *because* of the ways in which their skateboards could be used with them: coping blocks can be grinded as the axles (termed 'trucks') of the board are ridden over them, and the tiles provide an audible reverberation as skateboard wheels travel across them, signalling

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that the skateboarder has risen to the steepest part of the bowl. These design elements of the backyard pool are valued features that resonate with an embodied phenomenology of experience of riding the pools, an experience that was similarly desired in skatepark bowls. In the British context, skateparks, such as the Rom heritage park in Essex, transplanted the typical Californian backyard pool from American skateparks is an apparent hybridity that continues to be replicated across the world to this day. Bowls mimicking the classic Californian backyard pool are to be found across the globe in territories as diverse as Bali and Tehran (Lioncityskaters 2012; Dedeu 2013).

The rise in popularity of new skateparks at the turn of the century also signals a further evolution of skateboarding. New parks, while still frequently housing bowls, also accommodate new skateboarding practices in replicating features of the city that skateboarders have often appropriated (Howell 2005). 'Skate plazas' most directly re-create urban elements, the first of which is Vancouver Skate Plaza (2004) and commonly possess features such as stairs, handrails, concrete ledges, manual pads along with flat banks, transitions of varying angles and gaps which manifest as void space between obstacles that skateboarders try to jump between. A most recent addition to these features are 'pole jams'.

The pole jam is deserving of elaboration because it represents a popular element in street skateboarding that is becoming increasingly incorporated into skatepark design. Deriving its name from a trick originally performed in the late 1980s by professional skateboarder Jef Hartsel, the pole jam is a hybrid of both an action and an object (Swisher 2017). The pole jam object is usually a short metal pipe between 3–4 feet long that is angled approximately 35° off the floor. Skateboarders perform a pole jam trick when they ride up the pole on their trucks and launch from it into the air performing varying aerial manoeuvres. The activity evolves from skateboarding on metal poles holding signs dented and bent by car collisions in parking lots. The pole jam object of the street itself exemplifies hybridity, originating in a pole to designate a functional parking space that is too vertical to be of much interest to skateboarders. As it becomes damaged in everyday usage, perhaps as a car reverses too far and pushes it partially over, skateboarders recognize and develop a new activity for the damaged pole. As skatepark designs have to continually keep up to date with skateboarding innovations, they have increasingly incorporated the pole jam object (this damaged parking pole), and thus the pole jam trick (the use of this damaged parking pole), as a design element. Similarly, skateboarders can purchase pole jams from skateboard ramp manufacturers to use in their own backyard or driveway (Element Skateboards 2014).

This interplay reveals an enduring truth about the skatepark. Unlike the football pitch or basketball court, skatepark design is not static, but exists as a form of hybridity in negotiation with the life skateboarders have outside of the skatepark. New forms of park design replicate plazas, urban civic centres, parks and shopping malls. These are the very same areas which skateboarders have been excluded from. The Vancouver skate plaza and the DC Shoes Kettering skate plaza, opening in 2004 and 2005, respectively, are remarkable because they look like anonymous urban spaces. These places are not only hybrid but also paradoxical. The paradox exists in the fact that urban plazas are arguably liminal spaces, grand entrances to shopping malls and office blocks that house people's movement between places of production and consumption. The real value of these spaces is replicated in their

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uniform anonymity. In co-opting these spaces in ludic recreation, skateboarders have been seen as a threat to order, safety, business and property. They are thus excluded. In recompense for their rejection, skateboarders are given a replicated space. The skate plaza skatepark is thus a hybrid entity and also a simulacra, or 'hyperreal' as Borden (2019) describes. It is a representation of an urban centre without the commerce and community intentionally connected to it. This can be understood as problematic as skateboarders have been seen to be a positive presence in urban settings, in some reports giving elderly residents a feeling of safety (Jenson, Swords, and Jeffries 2012). This relates to the arguments of Jane Jacobs (1992) that communities need to be integrated with 'eyes on the streets' not segregated and broken up.

At a further abstraction, the skatepark and its design elements indicate an ongoing hybridity between skateboarding and the urban environments. This hybridity is material and exists in opposition to the critics who claim hybridity is intangible. On the contrary, with reference to our environment we see tangible patterns of mix that are evocative examples of hybridity. All animals, including humans, exist and swim collectively 'in an ocean of materials', materials which in turn make up environments in hybrid ways (Ingold 2011, 24). In reference to criticisms of hybridity, skateboarder activities are not just a visual mix but layered signals to the actions that have taken place. The skatepark is thus exemplary of this dialectic, highlighting how skateboarders continue to remake the city through play.

Ingold (2011, 47) claims that in a variety of ways 'pedestrian activities can mark the landscape'. In a similar manner, skateboarding has left a plurality of marks on the landscape. At a fundamental level, chipped marble ledges, splintered public benches and waxed kerbs are all evidence of skateboarding, signalling the performance of culture in the streets. This marking is not a symbol of destruction, but of appropriation and use, signalling a type of sustainability of a culture that is at once a part of the city and is also excluded (Vivoni 2013). Moreover, it might be argued that scuff marks on urban architecture are no more offensive or an eyesore than parked cars, litter bins, corporate advertisement and street signs. The marks of skateboarding might be better understood as a type of urban semiotics, where skateboarders not only communicate their presence, but what they did. Scuff marks to those with the knowledge to decode them signal wall rides, boardslides and grinds, evidence of community and vitality.

A further example of hybridity can be observed in the way the criminalization of skateboarding has resulted in zones of exclusion in which skateboarders are physically obstructed from using urban features. The designed exclusion of skateboarders through the use of architectural features that include metal knobs, or skatestoppers, to prevent skateboarders sliding and grinding on ledges in public places, and also curved ledges, and cobbled paving which may be construed as impeding obstacles for the flow of skateboarding moves. These new methods of urban planning may even be incorporated into future designs as skateboarders, such as professional Jordan Maxham, evolve to skate upon handrails with skatestoppers and other hostile architectural features. The encounters between skateboarders in the urban environment influence both the design of skateparks and recursively the re-design of urban centres. In the case of the skatepark, new urban design is used as a method to attract skateboarders. Conversely, in some cases the city centre uses design to repel

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skateboarders. While it might be self-evident to regard the skatepark as a hybrid environment, it is important to recognize that increasingly towns and cities now also represent a hybridity in response to their encounters with skateboarders.

Ironically, skateparks are regarded with ambivalence by skateboarders in general, despite their increasing popularity and inclusion of features that specifically cater to skateboarding styles. 'Skate parks are fraught with debate within skateboarding communities about the relative containment of skate parks and the rules that often accompany them' (Yochim 2013, 12). In some ways they represent the institutionalization of skateboarding and can be understood as 'sportscapes', like football pitches and basketball courts (Peters 2018). Skateparks are often seen as a place of containment (Owens in Howell 2008) and an obstruction to the creativity, exploration and movement at the heart of skateboard culture. In an interview with professional skateboarder Guy Mariano, skateparks are referred to as 'skate prison' and are critiqued as becoming not simply a legitimate place to skate, but now the only place you are *meant* to skate (Patterson 2013). Patterson, in conversation with Guy Mariano, also notes that skateparks are *too* well designed, making it more difficult and challenging to skate the 'real world'. As one ethnologist, Sander Hölsgens (2018), has discovered, skateparks are used as extensions of one's own home in Seoul, Korea, suggesting that skatepark hybridity is so prevailing that it reaches into the domicile as well as outside in the streets. Skateparks are also paradoxical because of their lack of visibility in skateboard culture. Professional skateboarders, who gain much of their coverage through skateboard media in the guise of magazines and videos, tend to avoid documenting their skateboarding in skateparks. In reference to Beal and Weidman (2003) skateparks can be considered to be an inauthentic site to skateboard. One reason is that skateparks detract from the individuality and creativity that is held to be of central importance in skateboard culture. Thus, skateboarders are conflicted, requiring appropriate space and obstacles to skate, and also requiring a wild and fecund environment to explore possibility. (For more on this conflict, see Glenney and Mull 2018.)

A further response to the sterile inauthenticity of skateparks is demonstrated in the hybrid practice of constructing DIY skateparks, or spots, that were noted earlier and claimed as skate 'reserves'. It is significant that DIY spots, often placed in hidden parts of the city, appropriate skatepark design and construction. DIY spots do not look like natural urban phenomena; they are typically concrete transitions, banks or even patches applied to make imperfect spaces skateable. Yet they do not look like designed and professionally constructed skateparks. One reason is that they are constantly being manipulated, added to, remoulded and extended. The DIY spot is dramatically hybrid, akin to a palimpsest echoing the constant movement of skateboarding itself.

The last decade has seen a considerable boom in what has been called the 'crete-and-hope' practice of stealthily putting down concrete to create a new skatespot in the hope that it will not be dismantled or destroyed (Lawton 2018). However, another hybrid turn, first seen in Burnside and further pioneered in Malmö, is the local government embrace of DIY skate spots as a public good. Sweden's Pontus Alv has been at the forefront of this revolution, and while many of his DIY projects have been destroyed, his TBS (Train Banks Spot) is now a global tourist attraction. Alv declares that the spot is relatively untouched by local skaters,

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but it is celebrated by the local government because of the skateboard tourists it attracts (SOLO Skateboard Magazine 2017). Thus, Malmö has partnered with skateboarders on DIY projects such as TBS and Bryggeriet (which has become a non-profit school) as part of savy city place marketing. The latest Malmö instalment features Alexis Sablone's skateable art sculpture, 'Lady in the Square'. In Malmö, the hybridity of the skatepark is distinct, spilling beyond the world of skateboarding and becoming a key part of the city's urban regeneration. Take for example Gustav Edén, a veteran skateboarder who holds the title of 'Official Skateboarding Coordinator for The City of Malmö'.

Similar hybrid dynamics are occurring globally as local governments learn from DIY skateboard projects and the triumphs of cities such as Malmö. Within the UK the city of Hull has declared itself as 'skate friendly' and introduced design elements in public places specifically for skateboarding (BBC News 2016). Paines Park in Philadelphia opened in 2013 designed as a co-use space for pedestrians and skateboarders and everyone in between. The city of Seattle has fused the traditional practice of skateparks, street skateboarding and DIY spots in the introduction of 'skate dots', small skateable features introduced to public places (Owens 2014). Moveable skate structures such as small ramps and poles offer further strategies for skateable terrain. A popular figure in skateboarding known as 'Manramp', a person dressed as a construction worker carrying a piece of plywood, transforms into a ramp structure to make otherwise inaccessible street features accessible, manifesting a type of human/ramp hybridity (Figure 2).

These can also be understood as hybrid in a new way, often involving skateboarder and artist collaboration, commercial sponsorship and government zoning; these private-public partnerships are new forms of skateboard urbanism such as the Red Bull Skate Space (Earvin 2014). Such private-public issues are discussed by McClain et al. (2018) with regard to the way gender is addressed in new forms of skatepark development, and also by Orpana (2015) in the context of changing relationships surrounding DIY elements introduced to an existing skatepark. A further manifestation of a new and experimental skatepark is the stealthpark (Borden 2019), places designed for open and ambiguous use that are appealing to skateboarding while not necessarily designated or declared as skateboarding spots. Examples of stealthparks might be the Austrian Landhausplatz, in Innsbruck, or Barcelona's Auditoria park. New skateparks, as skate dots, DIY initiatives, public-private partnerships and even stealthparks are all radically hybrid in design, materials, use and organization. Street, pool and skatepark terrains have gone through different eras of popularity and development, designers have been both paid professional architects and skateboarders and increasingly the line between the two blur, or are non-existent in the case of companies such as California and Grindline Skateparks. Spaces for skateboarding are hybrid in various ways: as both appropriated, excluded and given spaces. A basic overview of these developments is included in Figure 3 and highlights the hybrid evolution of skateboard terrain, a metaphor that runs throughout the history of built spaces for skateboarding.

Conclusion

The argument here is that the skatepark is a part of the hybrid ecology of the city. The skatepark cannot be understood as simply a designed and constructed element. It has a

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relationship that extends beyond this and is connected to urban space and the nuances of skateboard culture. Throughout the paper it was observed that skatepark design exists in dialectic with the activities skateboarders have outside of the skatepark. This can extend to a heritage in Californian backyards, or to bent parking lot poles. The skatepark is also part of an ambiguous political process that sees skateboarders excluded from the city in design and legislation, then included in planning and process in the provision of specific legitimate spaces. The celebration of skateboarder ethics in neoliberal urban governance is troubling for skateboarders as they are domesticized and encouraged to only skate in their designated spaces. Yet new forms of skatepark design highlight that the story is far from over, that negotiations about skateable space fuse multiple material and social interests.

However, this tale of hybridity highlights that the city remains an important part of the rhythm of the skatepark. The city is utilized when the park is closed, it remains the archetypal terrain for skateboarders and is represented this way in their media. Skateboarders continue to harbour aspirations to turn the city into a skatepark, and in places such as Malmö and Seattle there is evidence of this unfolding. This is further illuminated in the way in which skateboarders, with the help of corporate sponsorship from Nike, were able to win the legitimate use of the LA Courthouse public park for skateboarding. This saw the removal of designed, skatestopper elements from ledges to facilitate the activities of skateboarders. In a unique move skateboarders have been awarded use of the LA Courthouse as long as they maintain order (Eisenhour 2014).

Such a move signals that skateboarders are achieving rights to the city, and that skateboard spaces are increasingly a way in which a city can speak of its attitude to youth, creativity and public space. Owens (2014) states that with regard to skateparks, 'the pendulum of history is swinging back towards the cities now'. This point specifically addresses increasing recognition of a need for cities to incorporate skateable features in urban space to include skateboarders in the community and give them access to moving around their city as a form of citizenship. This looks to a future that is unfolding in uneven ways throughout the globe, where skateboarders will no longer be partitioned and secluded from the city. However, the DIY initiative similarly signals that the city might not be enough, that skateboarders will always seek to render their environment in new and creatively experimental ways, however hospitable it may be. Hybridity helps to frame these transformations, while these changes provide empirical evidence of hybridity at play. A final consideration is that skateboarding may itself be best understood as a hybrid practice, a frame that allows people to make sense of both the wild nature in which its practitioners traverse urban space, and also the organized sporting face of the activity.

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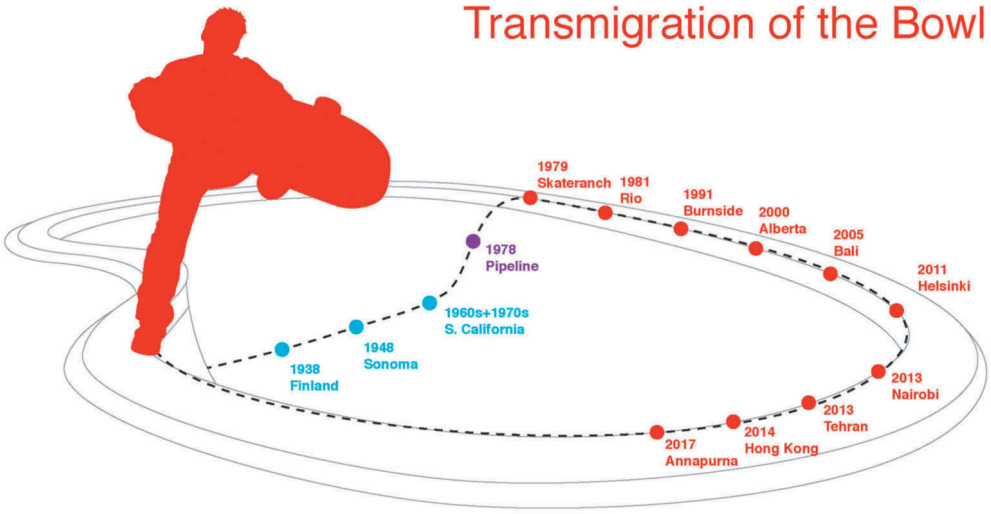

Figure 1.

The kidney bowl, now built in skateparks across the world, originated in Finland as a natural form swimming pool. The pool was recreated in California a decade later and became a backyard staple across Southern California, where it was discovered by skateboarders and recreated as a bowl for their own enjoyment, even returning back to its homeland in 2011. Source: design credit, Tim Ferguson Sauder.

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Figure 2.
Manramp, aka Alex Farrara, becomes a mobile ramp with the help of a piece of plywood, turning this city street corner into a skateable 'gap' for skateboarder Steve Mull.
Source: photo credit, Zorah Olivia.

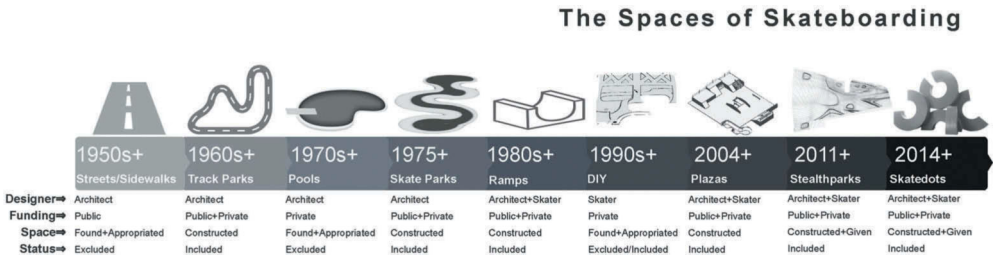

Figure 3.

Skateboarding is a multi-spatial activity: from multi-million dollar publicly funded architect-design city-centre skateparks, to appropriating found public spaces such as streets and sidewalks, to constructing DIY modifications.

Source: design credit: Brian Glenney.

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